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ABSTRACT

This book reports on an examination of educational policy in Australia and focuses on the educational and training needs of and provision for young people entering working life. The content is in two parts. Part 1, which comprises two-thirds of the report, has ten chapters. Chapter 1 identifies nine topics on which the report is focused. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the educational setting in Australia, and its federal system. Major trends in the provision of secondary and postsecondary Australian education and the patterns of student enrollment, are identified in chapter 4. Chapter 5 covers curriculum and examinations and includes the social role of education and educational expansion. Chapter 6 analyzes the relationship between education and the world of work and shows how recent changes in the structure of employment have affected the ways in which young people enter working life. Chapter 7 examines whether some of the imbalances between tertiary, technical, and further education might be in part a result of the different financial sources. Chapters 8 and 9 cover career education, transition services, and the problems of disadvantaged groups. The final chapter in part 1 addresses eight sets of questions to the Australian authorities to promote discussion of the issues. Part 2 is a record of the discussion at a review meeting at which searching questions pertaining to the issues covered in the report were put to an official Australian delegation. (EM)

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REVIEWS OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION

AUSTRALIA

TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK OR FURTHER STUDY

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
PARIS 1977

CE 013 337

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PREFACE

This book contains a two-part report of an examination of educational policy in Australia conducted in 1976 within the framework of the OECD Education Committee's well-established "Country Review" procedure. The examination was focussed upon educational and training needs of and provision for young people faced with the problem of entering into working life. Part One consists of the Examiners' report; Part Two is a record of the questions discussed at a meeting in Paris of an official Australian delegation, the four Examiners and members of the Education Committee. The book is complemented by a comprehensive Background Report prepared by the Australian Commonwealth authorities and already published by OECD under the title: Educational Policy and Planning: Transition from School to Work or Further Study.

Besides identifying major trends in the provision of secondary and post-secondary education and in the changing pattern of student enrolments, the Examiners' report analyses the relationship between education and the world of work and shows how recent changes in the structure of employment have fundamentally affected the ways in which young people enter into working life.

The Examiners deal with the relationship between the Commonwealth Government and the six States. In educational matters the power of the Commonwealth Government is technically restricted to providing funds for specified purposes. The Examiners observe how during recent years the Government's role has tended to change. This is particularly clear in its efforts to reduce inequalities in educational provision by allocating disproportionately high grants to schools judged to be deficient in resources and by financing projects designed to assist disadvantaged groups.

It is obvious that coherent policies to facilitate the transition from school to work call for an adequate degree of co-ordination between education and employment policies. The Examiners come to the conclusion that as in many other countries, such co-ordination needs to be reinforced. That the Australian authorities share this view is shown by the fact that a national "Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training" has now been appointed.

Within recent years the system of secondary education in Australia has undergone striking changes in response to new public and individual demands. Yet there is unprecedented questioning of the practical relevance of its functions. One reason for this is that the ability range of today's secondary students is much wider than in the past and many of them no longer proceed to university. The Examiners consider that the challenge facing the authorities is how to devise flexible structures and curricula which will cater for the varying needs of all students in a given age group without foreclosing at an early stage the options of slow learners or penalising the academically gifted. The response of the authorities has been to initiate reforms designed to diversify the curriculum, to apply more flexible methods of assessment and to make it possible for those young people who leave school at the compulsory school-leaving age or during the upper secondary cycle to combine paid employment with further study.

In the opinion of the Examiners the restructuring of secondary education should be paralleled by the restructuring of post-secondary education. Entry rates to post-secondary education are not high by comparison with certain other countries. A sector with notable potential for development is that known in Australia as Technical and Further Education. This sector has been relatively deprived of support in the past and yet it is the one that is best placed to meet the needs of the majority of school leavers by providing not only specialised occupational training but opportunities for recurrent education.

The Examiners conclude that special attention needs to be given to that group of young people who leave school without qualifications and who undertake no further study. It is essential for society as a whole actively to seek ways and means of assisting this group to improve their prospects by means of further education and training.

One necessary measure is to build up efficient careers-education and transition services. The Examiners feel that there are two main desiderata: the appointment of guidance and counselling specialists on an adequate scale, and more effective co-ordination of the contributions of education and employment authorities, employers and trade unions. They also feel that parents, who exercise so much influence over the career choices of their children, should be given as much relevant information as possible.

The Examiners' report together with the detailed answers to searching questions put to the Australian delegation at the review meeting and the report prepared by the Australian authorities can serve as a timely case-study for consideration by other OECD countries currently preoccupied with the education and employment problems of young people.

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Part One

REPORT BY THE EXAMINERS

FOREWORD

This review, which focusses on an area of fundamental concern to the determination of the Australian educational policies, has been carried out as part of the programme of the Education Committee of the OECD. It follows another OECD review of Australian manpower policies completed in 1974.

In preparing their report, the four Examiners benefited from an extensive visit to Australia during the entire month of July 1976. They spent varying periods of time in the Federal capital and in the capitals of the six States, interviewing a large number of officials concerned with educational and employment policies as well as representatives of a wide range of interested agencies, associations and institutions at the Federal, State and community level. They visited schools, colleges, universities, employment offices and work places and spoke to many school-age and post-secondary level students, educational administrators, teachers, parents, workers, trade unionists and employers. They had access to an imposing array of published and confidential official documents and took account of a considerable number of written submissions from institutions, groups and individuals.

In constructing their report the Examiners have deliberately refrained from recapitulating information contained in the Background Report previously prepared by the Australian Commonwealth Department of Education for the specific purposes of this review. They wish to pay tribute to the comprehensiveness of that report, its frankness in discussing contentious issues and the rich mine of statistical and other data that it offers. Many of the issues and problems in that report are, of course, taken up in the Examiners' report as a point of departure for their analysis and critique.

The task of the Examiners was facilitated by the impeccable arrangements made on their behalf during their visit to Australia. They wish to express their gratitude to those officials of the Commonwealth Education Department, both in Canberra and in the State offices, who planned and managed their programme and took endless pains to cater for their personal needs. They also wish to thank all the public and non-governmental organisations which arranged interviews and visits. Finally, they wish to pay tribute to the candour and forebearance with which all whom they interviewed replied to their frequently awkward questions. As encounter followed encounter they were more and more struck by the open discussion about education and employment in Australia. They only hope that their own report will make a useful contribution to that discussion.

I

THE ISSUES

The selection by the Australian authorities of the transition from school to work or further study for a country review examination must be welcome in many Member countries. The problems of early school leavers, the relevance of secondary school curricula to social needs, the issue of credentialism, the changing structure of the labour market and the general issue of policies for 'youth' are all becoming widespread matters of concern. We believe that this review, together with the excellent Background Report prepared by the Australian Federal Government, can serve as a case study that will help other countries to analyse their own youth problems and seek solutions for them.

The transition from education to work is one of the four or five most important changes in activity and status that occur in the lives of most individuals, having something in common with such other major transitions as starting school, marriage and retirement from work. The transition from school to tertiary study, although a rather smaller jump, is also a major change in the lives of those young people who undertake further study after leaving school. The significance of these transitions and their importance in the lives of individuals has long been realised by some social scientists, but the broader study of the interfaces between different social systems that they represent and their implications for social policy have only recently begun to receive attention.

Any of these major transitions from one system of social relationships to another is a stage in a process that can be understood fully only in the context of the whole process. What a young person elects to do when he ends his compulsory education is influenced by events that occurred far back in his primary education and even before and also by his perceptions of the current and prospective situation in the labour market. At the same time, the transition itself is an event with its own unique problems and difficulties. During and immediately after such major changes of social role any individual, and particularly a young person, is particularly susceptible to influences and pressures exerted on him by his environment.

The growing concern about the transition from school to work is one aspect of an increasing unease about the social role of schools and other formal educational institutions that has almost completely replaced the heady optimism of the 1960s about the functions of education in economic and social development. The Examiners have therefore interpreted their terms of reference to review the transition from school to work or further study in both a broad and narrow sense.

Our broad concern has been to study the interface between the education system with its constituent parts and the labour market or employment system. We have considered both written and oral evidence on the expectations of employers, unions, parents and students with respect to the education system and we have heard and read the evidence of educationists, teachers, administrators, policy-makers and students about the aims and objectives of Australian secondary and tertiary education. We have also devoted some attention to the administrative arrangements whereby educational aims and objectives are put into practice.

Our principal focus, however, has been on the more specific issue of the problems that arise when young people are undergoing the actual process of transition that occurs at the interfaces between the systems of education and employment and between the schools and other branches of the education system. Following the recommendations of the document agreed between the Australian authorities and the OECD Secretariat on the theme of this review we concentrate particularly on those who leave school at or around the minimum legal school-leaving age or at the end of upper secondary education without proceeding to further study. We devote relatively little attention specifically to the 20% of the age group who proceed from school to tertiary education. It was not of course possible to ignore entirely the problems of this group of students. There is a preoccupation with graduate unemployment in Australia and the related problem of credentialism. In particular, we were made aware on many occasions of the problems that are looming in the area of teacher training and supply, and in view of the similarity between the situation in Australia and a number of other countries we think that teacher education might be regarded as a possible subject for a country review fairly shortly. In general, however, we consider that the minority of young people who move to tertiary education are well catered for in Australia. Any problems result more from an excessive concentration on higher education within recent years than from any inadequacies in either the quantity or the quality of provision.

Within this general framework we identified, at an early stage in our deliberations, nine main topics on which we decided to focus our attention. They are:

i) possible divergences between the specific objectives of education as perceived by people within education and those perceived by society at large;

ii) the possibility of organisational or administrative defects which might prevent the education system from fulfilling its desired social role;

iii) the after effects of the massive expansion of tertiary education in the late 1960s and early 1970s;

iv) the effects of the present economic recession and the associated high level of unemployment;

v) possible worsening structural imbalances in the labour market of a secular nature;

vi) the effects of earlier high immigration which may have led employers to neglect problems of labour supply;

vii) possible inadequacies and distortions in the flow of information about the employment situation to young people in educational institutions;

viii) the possibility that special difficulties are experienced on leaving school by particular groups such as Aborigines, recent migrants and some groups of females;

ix) possible changes in cultural and social attitudes that may have resulted in a widening of any generation gap.

It is possible to think of these either as topic headings or as hypotheses that we sought to validate or reject. In any case it is very desirable to differentiate between them and evaluate their relative importance because the types of policies they point to vary considerably. In brief, we focussed on the issues of whether there are serious imbalances between the education and employment systems that are manifested in undue difficulties at the point of school leaving, whether they are primarily associated with the economic recession or are longer term and structural, and finally the extent to which the roots of any difficulties are to be found in the education system or in labour market arrangements.

Before turning to the main body of our report we outline the types of evidence that we were seeking under each of these headings.

i) Perception of social role of education

Obviously the aims and objectives of education and society's expectations about its role are rather vague concepts about which it is difficult to adduce hard evidence. There are many different answers and indeed the same individuals may express conflicting views in the course of a single meeting (as some of our witnesses quite legitimately did) about their roles, for example, as parents, employers, administrators or teachers. These are nevertheless fundamentally important questions and we were able to form broad opinions by talking to hundreds of people and reading the written evidence of hundreds more. During our four weeks in Australia we spoke individually and in small groups to about 500 people (this excludes the occasion when three members of our team found themselves unexpectedly confronted with an assembly of over 200 fourth and fifth formers expecting a talk on the role of the OECD). Issues connected with the social role of education pervade the whole report but Chapter V on curricula and examinations is particularly relevant to the topic. In Chapter X the first set of questions addressed to the Australian authorities is concerned specifically with the different perceptions of the social purposes of education in Australia.

ii) Organisation and administration

Even if there is a broad measure of agreement about the aims and objectives of education, their realisation may be impeded by defects in the organisational and administrative arrangements. Where, as in Australia, responsibility for educational provision is shared between Federal and State authorities on the basis of a whole series of part compromises and political bargains that supplement the basic constitutional and legal principles, distortions between aims and their realisation must be carefully guarded against. Although it was clearly no concern of ours to examine Federal-State relations in general, in some respects they do have a direct bearing on the issues we were studying. Chapter III is devoted specifically to this topic and we return to one aspect of it in Chapter VII where we consider whether some of the imbalances between tertiary education and technical and further education might be in part a result of the different sources of finance. In Chapter X the first main question bears upon this issue as do some of the questions in Section B and some of the subsidiary questions in Sections C and E.

Another set of administrative relationships more central to our main concern is that between the education and employment authorities at both Federal and State levels. The most important 'transition' we were examining is in essence a transition of young people from the primary responsibility of the education authorities to what we believe should be the joint responsibility of the education and employment authorities. Unless relationships between the two bodies are strong and unless their policies are co-ordinated any problems of transition are likely to be exacerbated. Chapters VI and VIII of our report pertain to this issue and there is a series of questions to the Australian authorities about it in Section B of Chapter X.

iii) Effect of tertiary education expansion

In Australia, as in most other OECD countries, the present widespread uncertainty about the value of some of the tertiary education that is being provided has followed a period of very rapid growth in which there was considerable optimism about the social and economic benefits of educational expansion. We were able to trace the expansion of secondary and higher education in Australia during the past fifteen years or so and to consider the main reasons for it as set out in the many excellent reports of the committees of enquiry at Federal and State levels which have preceded almost all the educational changes of the past two decades. By comparing expectations about the benefits of education with the current state of opinion as expressed by our witnesses and as spelled out in newspapers and elsewhere we gained some impression of the extent to which present preoccupations can be viewed as a swing of the public opinion pendulum.

Much more tangible are the structural imbalances that may have resulted from the expansion and these were among our main concerns. One of the most obvious is what has come to be called 'credentialism' - the raising of the educational qualifications required by employers for particular jobs even though the content of the jobs has changed little. This can result in considerable waste of resources and - even more important from the point of view of our enquiry - in a great deal of personal unhappiness if some people are over-qualified for the jobs they obtain while others with intrinsically adequate educational qualifications experience increasing difficulty in finding such jobs or holding the ones that they have. Another imbalance occurs if the pressure to obtain certain kinds of credentials results in a shortage of suitable people willing to undertake alternative types of education and training, such as apprenticeships and other vocational and technical training. Another structural problem may arise from rapid expansion as a result of response lags or, as they are often seen, excessively high job aspirations of school and college leavers. However, it is all too easy to blame school leavers and graduates for having unrealistically high expectations simply because they have hopes of obtaining the kind of jobs that their elder brothers and sisters found without difficulty only a year or two earlier. One approach is of course to improve the flows of labour market information and this is discussed under vii) below.

Chapter V outlines the main features of educational expansion in Australia, and Chapter VI considers some of the structural imbalances that may have followed from it. Some of the subsidiary questions in Section B of Chapter X seek further information and invite discussion on this issue as do some of those in Section E. The questions in Section H draw attention to what we see as some weaknesses in the currently available statistics.

iv) Effect of economic recession and employment situation

The Australian economy, along with the economies of most of the Western world, is experiencing some obvious short-term employment problems brought about by the recent recession. School leavers and young workers form a large group of job-seekers who are in principle readily identifiable, though we feel that there are some deficiencies in the supply of information - at least at the Federal level. Clearly any substantial unemployment among young people for more than short periods is a serious matter which may colour the attitudes of a whole generation throughout the working lives of its members.

v) Structural imbalance in the labour market

In searching for remedies it is vitally important to distinguish the effects of cyclical unemployment on young people, which can be overcome in the long run, along with unemployment in general, through general demand management in the economy from those of structural imbalances which may require a reorientation of training and manpower policies. Insofar as time and available statistics permitted, we examined trends in some of the relevant indicators over as long a period as possible and concluded, together with most of our Australian witnesses who had made a serious study of them, that although the present recession has undoubtedly made the difficulties more acute, there are underlying structural imbalances in the economy and in the system of education and training that give cause for concern.

Chapter VI is primarily concerned with the issues outlined in the previous two paragraphs and we return to these themes in some of the subsidiary questions in Section B of Chapter X and also in the question on Early Leavers in Section F.

vi) Immigration

It is impossible to make any investigation of the Australian labour market without considering the effects of immigration. These are complex and for our purposes can be categorised into first, problems facing children of recent immigrants in obtaining education, training and employment that is suited to their abilities and interests, and second, the effects of immigration on the short-term and long-term opportunities open to young people who were born in Australia or have already lived there for several years.

As far as the first group is concerned it is often claimed that children of recent immigrants are a disadvantaged group in Australia and we consider their problems in Chapter IX, along with those of other possibly disadvantaged groups of young people.

The second issue is largely one of general economic and manpower policy but it may adversely affect the training opportunities open to young people if employers become accustomed to a situation in which they can turn immigration on and off like a tap and so develop an apathetic attitude towards training and manpower planning. The immigration issue underlies some of the discussion in Chapter VI and forms the substance of question B6 in Chapter X.

vii) Guidance and orientation

No matter how well defined the aims and objectives of education, and no matter how well conceived public policies, they are unlikely to be successful if there are inadequacies and distortions in the flow of information reaching young people about the jobs and educational and training opportunities available and the ways of taking advantage of them. A careful study of what we have called transition services was one of the most important aspects of our entire investigation. Information, guidance and counselling services are a favourite target for criticism. Educational counsellors and vocational guidance officers have a specific responsibility for ensuring that young people make wise educational and career choices and are therefore in the front line if there is a lack of harmony between the education system and the rest of society. When counsellors do not exist it is easy to recommend that they should; if they do exist it is equally easy to claim that they are not doing their jobs properly. An examination of the scope and functions of the counselling services available to secondary school children was clearly central to our enquiry. We tried, however, to consider their functions in the whole spectrum of relationships between school and society and not merely their role of fostering decision-making powers and imparting information about jobs and tertiary and further education courses to those about to leave school. If there is a fundamental disequilibrium between schools and society it is clearly as impossible to expect counsellors to deal with it by themselves as to expect a television technician to produce a colour picture from a set that will receive only black and white. We considered, therefore, the whole range of careers education available in schools and the place of career education in the curricula as well as evaluating the extent to which school leavers refer to careers advisers in making their educational and occupational choices.

Chapter VIII is devoted entirely to Careers Education and Transition Services as is the whole of Section D in Chapter X.

viii) Problems of special groups

Our brief specifically required us to examine "the provision of particular programmes and opportunities to assist the transition from school for special groups such as Aborigines, migrants and the handicapped". We were urged by several witnesses to devote special attention to the problems of girls and young women and decided to consider these also as a potentially disadvantaged group. It was also pointed out to us that one group of young people with special problems were those in isolated areas. Our treatment of such groups has two main features. We were first concerned to ascertain whether there is any reason to believe that the problems of transition are in fact solely - or mainly - problems for the disadvantaged rather than for young people as a whole and we were also concerned to ascertain to what extent certain problems, although existing for everybody, bear especially severely on particular groups of people.

Chapter IX gives views on these disadvantaged and potentially disadvantaged groups and concludes that the situation facing each of the five categories identified above are distinct and that it is not very helpful simply to lump them together under the general heading of the disadvantaged. Section G of Chapter X addresses a number of questions to the Australian authorities about some of the problems facing young people from particular groups.

ix) Generation gap

A change in social attitudes and structures is a vague intangible concept clearly not susceptible to verification during a brief visit. However, we were struck by the number of times that people from all walks of life commented on the great changes in education and in Australian society generally that have occurred in the past few years and are still occurring. If there are such changes, they are likely to affect young people differently from, and perhaps more quickly and to a greater extent than, their elders, thus creating a generation gap and possibly a situation of culture shock. Those who do not easily accept new developments may see the changes themselves as problems and in so doing may possibly even create problems.

This is a concern that pervades much of our report rather than forming the subject of a particular section. However, it is particularly relevant to the discussion of curriculum and assessment in Chapter V and of employment trends in Chapter VI, since one of the clearest manifestations of the phenomenon is a widespread belief among older people that many young people leave school ill-equipped intellectually and attitudinally for the world of work. The replies to question A1 in Section A and some of the questions in Section C should throw further light on this issue.

II

THE SETTING

To appreciate the problems of education and training and the entry of young people into work in Australia, it is necessary to have some understanding of its geography, history and basic educational structure.

It is well known that Australia covers a large area of about the same size as continental United States (excluding Alaska) and larger in area than all the OECD countries of Western Europe combined. It is also widely known that the population is small for so large an area - about 13. 5 million in 1975. What many people outside Australia perhaps do not know is that its population is concentrated in urban areas and that 70% of the population live in 16 cities of over 100,000 population. Most of the education and employment problems are those of an urban society. The concentration of nearly three-quarters of the population in large urban communities in an otherwise sparsely populated continent creates special problems for educational planners. In each of the States there is a very large metropolitan area around the State capital (all on the coast), a very small number of other large cities (mostly on the coast) and a vast sparsely populated hinterland. The problems of transition from school to work and of making adequate provision for secondary, tertiary and further education differ greatly from rural to urban areas. In addition, many of the large non-metropolitan cities (such as Broken Hill, Geelong, Newcastle and Wollongong) have a high concentration of heavy industry. This creates a very unbalanced labour market and in particular severe limitations on the employment opportunities for girls. Some of the most intractable problems concern young people leaving school in isolated rural areas - especially girls.

Over half of the population lives in five of the six State capitals, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth - which range in population from over two million in Sydney and Melbourne to a little under a million in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. Each of these provides a substantial self-contained labour market separated by several hundred miles from one another and there appears to be rather little population mobility between them. Education and training policies are almost all carried out on a statewide basis with little consideration of mobility between States. Even the major universities are State institutions catering mainly at the undergraduate level for the secondary school leavers of that State. (Graduate students come from a much wider catchment area and the academic staff of Australian universities are cosmopolitan.)

Australia is a rich country with a high average national income. By international standards this income is fairly equally distributed with a 'Gini coefficient' of pre-tax income of 0.3 compared with 0.4 for West Germany and the United States.* It is a country in which people have always laid great stress on ideas of 'fairness'. The concept of equality of opportunity in education and the more recent concept of positive discrimination in favour of physically and mentally handicapped children and to some extent the socially disadvantaged, although they reached Australia later than in some other OECD countries, have in general met with a favourable response - at least so long as they do not appear to conflict with the principle of economic efficiency which is partly responsible for the high standards of living that Australians enjoy.

Although Australia is a very rich country by international standards, funds for the expansion of education and training are likely to be severely limited in the foreseeable future. The present Government, which took office at the end of 1975, is committed to reducing the large public sector deficit, commonly regarded as being largely responsible for inflation in Australia, mainly through restraint on public expenditure. Practical policies for educational reform must therefore be framed in the context of not more than a slow rate of growth of total expenditure and we have borne this in mind in our analysis of post-compulsory education and training opportunities.

The Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of six semi-autonomous States and two territories, the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra) and the Northern Territory both administered directly by the Federal Government. Under the terms of the Australian constitution education is primarily a responsibility of the individual States, though in recent years the Federal Government has, through Act of Parliament, assumed increasing responsibility for the financing of education of all types. At the time of the Examiners' visit the Federal Government supplied all the finance of tertiary education through the Universities Commission and the Commission for Advanced Education, which is responsible for all non-university tertiary education. The Federal Government was also channelling funds to primary and secondary schools through the Schools Commission, though most of these were allocated through the intermediary of the State Education Authorities.

SOURCE: Income Distribution in OECD Countries, OECD, Paris 1976.

* The Gini coefficient is a measure of the overall distribution of income. A value of 0 indicates completely equal income distribution, the higher its value the less equal the distribution. A weakness of the measure is that a low value can conceal pockets of extreme poverty or wealth.

The administration of the education system in each State is highly centralised, but it is to be noted that some attempts at decentralisation have been made in recent years. It appeared to the Examiners that the existence of such a highly centralised system has often led to the uniform application of education policies throughout each State. The weakness of this is that policy approaches that are appropriate in large metropolitan areas are often not best suited to widely scattered and smaller communities.

During our tour of Australia we became aware of a certain insularity among administrators in many of the States that went beyond a simple regional pride. For example, we were told on many occasions that there is little labour force mobility between the States and that the provision of qualified manpower for social and economic needs is largely a matter of catering for essentially self-contained societies. There is an interesting contrast between the eagerness of educational policy-makers, planners and administrators to learn from experience in Europe and North America and their apparent reticence about studying the merits and demerits of innovations in neighbouring States. This is particularly noticeable in the area of post-compulsory education in which there are as many different sets of structural and organisational arrangements as there are States and in which many States have experienced major changes in recent years. The economic insularity of the States has been reinforced by the impact of high levels of immigration from abroad which has inhibited the emergence of economic disparities sufficiently large to create a single labour market for the whole of Australia.

Since 1970 the rate of immigration has noticeably slowed down whereas the sources of immigration have widened considerably. For example, Broken Hill Proprietary, the largest private employer in Australia, now employs apprentices from over 40 countries. As mentioned in Chapter I, the possibility of recruiting skilled immigrant labour may well have influenced the attitudes of many Australian employers towards the training of young people and adults.

The six separate State school systems together with those of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory do not, however, cover the whole of educational provision in Australia. In addition, there is in each State a system of Roman Catholic parochial primary and secondary schools and a network of independent schools that concentrate particularly on the provision of secondary education. Although in Victoria Technical and Further Education (TAFE) is partly integrated with the secondary school system, there are also strong reasons for considering it as a separate sub-system, largely State-run but with increasing Federal involvement through the Technical and Further Education Commission (TAFEC).

Finally, tertiary education is also a distinct system divided into a number of sub-systems. The 19 universities are autonomous institutions receiving their funds directly from the Commonwealth. Most of the 78 Colleges of Advanced Education were created from teacher training colleges and institutions that correspond in some ways to the British polytechnics. Although they offer degree and degree-level courses they would probably be identified as Short Cycle Institutions in OECD terminology. They are administered by State authorities under a variety of arrangements but also, like the universities, are dependent on the Federal Government for capital and recurrent funds.

In some respects the existence of the separate State systems makes the task of evaluating educational developments as a whole extremely hazardous. As is shown in the Background Report there has been a variety of approaches to the problem of organising a secondary education system that will satisfy the needs for individual development, offer some measure of equality to pupils and students, and meet the demands of employers and society at large. Nevertheless, we think it unwise to exaggerate the effects of administrative differences. As we moved from State to State we remarked that the problems of post-secondary education and the transition from education to employment were not all that dissimilar. In this short Examiners' report we attempt to probe underneath the surface differences between the various systems of education and tend therefore to emphasize common problems rather than differences. We are aware that some of our generalisations may not be applicable to all States, though we have tried to refer to exceptions where they are particularly striking.

As they visited the different States the Examiners detected a pronounced change in recent years in the relationship between Australian education and Australian society. It appears that the traditional view of education, particularly at the upper secondary and tertiary levels, is of a system geared to providing opportunities for those who will become leaders in society in various walks of life - industry, government, the professions - to develop their talents to full capacity. Such a system is very attractive to many groups of people: employers because it helps them select the most able young people; already well established social groups because it helps successful families maintain their position; and those who seek to better themselves because it offers a fairly sure road to upward social mobility. The point at which people have dropped out of this competitive race for academic success has had a strong influence on their subsequent chances in life.

In a country which, as we have noted, prides itself on its belief in fairness, the findings of educational researchers around the world that highly competitive, academically orientated secondary and higher education systems can reinforce social inequality have had a marked effect on educational opinions. Many of the recent developments in secondary education curricula can be seen in this light - for example, the modification of the examination system in response to recent pedagogical theories, the manifest dissatisfaction of many of the students who are experiencing it and the growing belief that in a basically egalitarian society the best start in adult life for the majority of young people is one which reinforces a sense of personal achievement rather than a sense of academic failure.

In some places changes have been more rapid than in others; often they have been more apparent than real. Many people welcome them; many others are anxious about some of the apparent consequences; a few reject them entirely.

III

THE FEDERAL SYSTEM

The States of Australia existed as political units long before the Commonwealth of Australia was formed in 1901. The common bond was their British heritage and allegiance to the Crown more than the fact that they happened to be situated on the same continental land mass. This common tradition has left its mark upon the education system and secured a considerable degree of uniformity in the six States in spite of great variety in detail. Constitutionally, education was left with the States as a specific responsibility at the time of federation. Although the Commonwealth has certain clearly defined constitutional powers related to the field of education, it continues to be, and is universally accepted as, primarily a responsibility of the States. The sheer size of each State and the difficulty of overland communication has kept the inter-State mobility of labour at a low level even for highly qualified manpower. This situation is reflected even today in the very high proportion of university students who live within commuting distance of their universities.

As in many other countries with a similar constitutional structure, the expansion of student numbers in both secondary and tertiary education since the Second World War, and the consequent need for staff and finance, has led to an increasing involvement of the Federal Government in the financing of education.

At the time of our visit Commonwealth funds covered the entire capital as well as recurrent costs of universities and Colleges of Advanced Education and provided for the financial support of students from low income families. In other sectors of the education system, school and technical and further education (TAFE), Commonwealth financial support is substantial and its contribution to innovation and qualitative improvement is significant. The Commonwealth also provides a number of infrastructural services such as the Curriculum Development Centre and the Education Research and Development Committee.

According to the budget estimates for 1975/76, the Commonwealth Government share in all public expenditure for education was about 43%; for schools and pre-schools 26%, for TAFE 29.5%. The Commonwealth contribution to the financing of primary and secondary education in the States and its own territories is more than the total outlay for universities and about 75% of that for universities and CAEs together.

The increasing Commonwealth involvement in education has not, as in some other federal countries such as Germany and Switzerland, been based upon or accompanied by major constitutional change, although one amendment was adopted in 1946 to give the Commonwealth Parliament power to legislate with respect to 'benefits to students'. The very large student assistance programmes of the Federal Government rest upon this constitutional power. Section 96 of the Australian Constitution, which allows for the Commonwealth to give financial support to the States and to attach conditions to it, has provided a mechanism for most of the main policy initiatives which the Commonwealth has undertaken since the war. It has enabled the Commonwealth to influence education policy without actually determining the structure, organisation or content of State education systems.

We gave some attention to the apparent divisions between the education and financial responsibilities of government. We did so in the context of future policy developments, especially those concerned with the interface between education and working life.

The first impression to be noted is that the present Commonwealth role in education seemed to arouse little controversy among politicians or educational administrators or among the general public. This may prove to be a false assessment in that it was made at a time when a new Commonwealth Government was in the process of reviewing the whole system of revenue raising and distribution between Commonwealth and States, in the context of which the present system of educational financing was frequently referred to as 'a case in point'.

Even if our impression of the political significance of the financing issue should be proved wrong, the fact that the system of Federal funding has developed so far without major conflicts calls for some explanation.

An important factual reason is that the general commitment of Commonwealth financial support for any State purposes using Section 96 is not usually justified by such statements as 'overriding national interest' or 'matters affecting areas of general Commonwealth responsibility'. It has been widely interpreted as simply a case of the Commonwealth granting money to the States to discharge their duties in the way they see fit, subject to minimal conditions attached to the grants. The 'earmarking' of funds does not, it seems, present a constitutional problem, nor does the separation of financial from policy responsibilities. There has been no need, therefore, to make education a national rather than a State responsibility in order to justify Commonwealth support. Although successive governments have for many years been under powerful political pressure to increase the financial support for education systems in the States, there has been little accompanying support for Federal interference with the day-to-day educational policies and practices.

The funding system has developed gradually, starting from a special programme to secure an adequate supply of highly qualified manpower in such fields as science and engineering during World War II. It then moved into support for universities and later to specific programmes for the sciences laboratories and libraries of secondary schools. It must be remembered that the funding of university education and the newer Colleges of Advanced Education occurred at a time when the discrepancy between highly qualified manpower demand and supply in many other countries warranted the argument that investment in education was an investment in future economic productivity.

A factor of considerable weight, though hard to quantify, seemed to us to be the use of the statutory commissions referred to above rather than Government departments as the mechanisms through which Commonwealth funds in education are allocated. This has led to frequent reference not to 'Commonwealth Government money' but to 'University (CAE, TAFE, Schools) Commission money', made available through State authorities to institutions responsible for a given sector. Individual schools, universities, State Government Departments and State Boards are involved in the preparatory process of defining need and priorities and have some latitude in allocation within the specified purposes. The inclusion of non-government, fee-charging schools, mainly Catholic schools, as recipients of public funds reduced one possible source of dissatisfaction.

The role and functioning of the commissions seems to be of great importance. They have rapidly come to be considered as the protagonists of the needs and interests of their respective sectors of education against other political lobbies, as well as agencies of the national Government or instruments of the politics of the majority party. Formation of this favourable attitude owes much to the professional expertise and awareness of sensitive political as well as educational issues of the members of the commissions and their support staff.

The financial support for schools and TAFE is not - as was the case in the earlier stages of university co-financing - based on some 'matching grants' formula, but rather intended to 'top up' State provisions to improve the quality of education on the national scale, and within that to give special support to those State (and non-government) systems that are lagging behind the national average. Those 85% of Schools Commission funds that go into general recurrent and capital expenditure do in fact contain an element of policy discretion in the sense of positive discrimination. The basis for distribution among the States is a complex 'needs' formula, with the condition that each State at least maintain its previous effort, measured, inter alia, by expenditure per pupil at an agreed 'real' level.

The policy effect is strengthened by the remaining 15% of specific purpose grants. The largest share of these funds goes to the support of schools with a catchment area of traditionally underprivileged population, i. e. mainly families with low incomes. In the last two years, over a thousand primary and secondary schools, holding about 13% of all pupils, have received special assistance under this scheme at an average of about 60 Australian dollars per pupil. Other specific purposes are programmes for special education, 'Services and Development', and 'Special Projects', the latter telling especially upon school or local initiative for innovation.

We posed the provocative question to State education representatives of whether or not they would prefer to substitute a greater allocation of funds in State budgets for 'earmarked' funds made available through the Federal commissions. We did not often elicit affirmative replies. On the contrary, several pointed out that if these funds had been treated as general State revenue, they might well not have been made available for education at all. Moreover, there was general agreement, substantiated by ample evidence, that the system had not induced the States to reduce their own efforts but rather had stimulated them to raise their own expenditures on education. It must be recognised, of course, that until very recently there has been a general consensus about the importance of education as a budgetary priority. The crucial test may yet come if, partly as a result of constraints on national resources, different assessments of social priorities should arise.

The successful creation of the commissions owed much to the fact that the Government was willing to allocate sufficient funds to enable them to underwrite their recommendations. Recently the Government has refused to meet the financial recommendations of the commissions and defined strict financial limits within which they must prepare their recommendations for the next triennium. This constraint was understandably regretted by many of the education representatives to whom we spoke, but we hope we are right in our assessment that it seems not to have affected the generally favourable attitude of most educational interest groups towards the commissions.

In discussions with the Examiners, administrators and school principals, politicians, parents' representatives, teachers and their union representatives - irrespective of their political leanings or overall attitude towards centralised bureaucracies - expressed general approval of the principles that have underlain Commonwealth support through the Schools Commission. Teachers spoke enthusiastically about the wholesome effect of the disadvantaged schools concept on schools in urban 'problem' areas with populations in the lower rungs of the socioeconomic scale. We heard less evidence of the same kind of boost to the morale of teachers and students in remote rural areas where it was rather increases in the supply of teachers in general that was expected to lead to educational improvement.

Whatever future changes might be decided upon in the distribution of revenue between Commonwealth and States, or in the criteria and mechanism for Commonwealth support to State school systems - the 'equality of opportunity' aspect of Commonwealth involvement, whether seen regionally, socially or ethnically, seems to us to be a lodestone. In the given historical and political context, it calls for a certain amount of political self-denial; there is no question of calling the tune to the extent one contributes to paying the piper. But, to stay within the metaphor: the commissions seem to have not only contributed to music being better performed and more widely appreciated throughout the nation: in their regular analysis of the situation from a national point of view as reflected in their annual reports, they have also contributed towards the development of political awareness and consensus on the main issues and tasks. It may well be that, in the long run, the integrating effect of discussing principles and goals, such as elitism versus equality, or integration of the handicapped rather than segregation, may prove of greater importance for national development than the funding criteria and amounts of money distributed as such.

IV

RECENT TRENDS IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

Australia shared in the massive expansion of upper secondary and higher education in the 1960s and early 1970s that was experienced in virtually all OECD Member countries. The number of pupils aged 16-18 enrolled full-time in school increased by 130% between 1962 and 1974,[4] the number of full-time students in universities trebled between 1961 and 1974 and the number of full-time and part-time students in tertiary institutions as a whole almost doubled between 1968 and 1974. No examination of current trends or current attitudes to post-compulsory education and the transition to work can ignore such rapid numerical changes.

As in many other OECD countries the growth in upper secondary school enrolments since about 1970 has been significantly less rapid than in the preceding years. In 1964, 38% of 16 year olds and 17% of 17 year olds were enrolled full-time in school. By 1972 the corresponding figures were 55% and 30%; two years later in 1974 they were almost identical. (Detailed tables of retention rates in secondary schools are given in the Background Report.) A slowing down in the rate of growth in full-time upper secondary education since the early 1970s is apparent in all the States and is shown by all the main statistical indicators. We feel that there has been inadequate research into possible reasons for changing enrolment patterns, which are probably related at least in part to changes in the youth labour market and the demand for highly qualified manpower.

The total figure conceals a marked difference between boys and girls. Participation rates in full-time school for boys aged 16-18 actually fell between 1972 and 1974 while those for girls have continued to rise. This has resulted in a closing of the gap between male and female participation in upper secondary education. In 1974, 53% of 17 year old pupils were boys and 47% girls. These trends continued up to 1975 but the retention rate for boys may have increased again in 1976 as a result of the poor employment opportunities for school leavers.

Enrolments in tertiary education have continued to increase at a rapid rate up to 1974 and preliminary indications suggest right through to 1976. The number of students in tertiary education rose from 15% of the age group 17-22 in 1972 to 18% in 1974 representing an increase in total enrolments of over 20% in two years. In the light of the conflicting trends in school retention rates and higher education entry rates it is apparent that some significant changes must have occurred since 1971: either it has become considerably easier for school leavers to enter a tertiary institution, or there has been a considerable influx into tertiary institutions of older people, including part-time students, who for one reason or another did not enter them at the normal age, or the average length of time students take to complete their tertiary studies has increased.

We were not able to obtain sufficient information to allow us to evaluate each of these factors but it is widely claimed that Colleges of Advanced Education and a few universities are increasingly adopting 'flexible' admission procedures which in practice lead to a greater intake of adult students and of those who lack the normal matriculation requirements.

After reviewing statistical information made available to us we came to the conclusion that there is no evidence in any State of a shortage of places in tertiary institutions for those who complete upper secondary education or a corresponding preparatory or tertiary orientation course in a technical or further education college. Indeed, some tertiary institutions are actively seeking more students.

This is not, of course, to claim that there are not some faculties in some institutions that are heavily over-subscribed. Those that provide professional training in the main universities in the State capitals are clearly still much in demand. Entry to all medical faculties, for example, is still very competitive. This raises issues, relevant in many countries, about the use of quotas for professional training at tertiary level as a way of limiting entry to the professions. These issues are important but take us outside the scope of this report.

Despite the rapid expansion of the 1960s, the apparent ease of entry into tertiary education and the belief of some critics that the tertiary sector expanded too fast in relation to demand, Australia is considerably behind Canada and the United States in the international league table of educational participation rates. On this basis it appeared to the Examiners that the fears expressed to us on several occasions that certain tertiary institutions may be over-expanded in relation to the demand by students for places is possibly true in the short term but may not be true in the long term.

There may, however, prove to be important barriers which will impede Australia's movement towards mass higher education on something like the North American scale. One of these is staffing ratios which at 1 staff member to 15 students in government secondary schools, and 1 teacher to 12 students in tertiary education appears to be favourable by international standards. Although such ratios are clearly very desirable and economically viable in a system with relatively low enrolments, they may not be possible when enrolments rise to the levels of mass tertiary education. (In this context, we believe that there may be some structural weaknesses in the way teachers are used in secondary schools since the ratios shown by the statistics appear to be so much more favourable than those elsewhere in the world, while at the same time, as is shown in Chapter V, there appear to be some shortcomings in curriculum arrangements.)

Another structural difficulty, we believe, is the division that has developed throughout Australia between tertiary education and technical and further education. The evolution of the Colleges of Advanced Education as a tertiary sector alongside the universities and the assumption of responsibility for their financing by the Commonwealth Government led to a situation in which they concentrated increasingly on full-time advanced level work.* This has resulted in the emergence of a tertiary education sector whose ethos tends towards the restricted elitist European systems rather than the more open systems in North America, while at the same time aiming at encouraging North American levels of enrolments.

The missing post-compulsory link, as in the United Kingdom and some other European countries, is Technical and Further Education (TAFE). It is not at present possible in Australia to ascertain precisely how many students are enrolled in TAFE institutions because the majority are part-time and some may enrol for more than one course; TAFEC estimates that TAFE students represent about 80% of TAFE enrolments. The problems and possibilities for development of TAFE are discussed in Chapter VII.

As well as quantitative expansion in upper secondary and higher education there have been qualitative changes that are equally significant for our enquiry. As pointed out in the Background Report, there has been movement towards a more comprehensive form of secondary education, though this has been more marked in some States than in others. This trend has manifested itself in three main ways - a gradual amalgamation of different types of government secondary schools under the general title of high school, the diversification of the curriculum, and the abolition of external examinations at the end of tenth year. A more recent development in some places is the abolition of external assessment at the end of the twelfth year also.

These changes, which are discussed in detail in Chapter V, were initiated in response to claims that previous institutional structures and curricula hindered the pursuit of equality of opportunity and the personal development of individual pupils through education by forcing pupils at a very early stage in their school careers to make choices about their futures based on narrow academic criteria.

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* i.e. at the level of university degree or equivalent.

The traditional pattern had been one in which pupils at the age of 12 entered one of two, and in some States up to four, different types of secondary school on the basis of their interests, parental wishes and achievement in primary schools. In some types of school (usually called technical schools) the expectation was that the majority of pupils would leave at the minimum legal school-leaving age while in others (usually called high schools) the normal expectation was that pupils would stay on until the end of the twelfth year and at least consider university entry as one of the options open to them. Not surprisingly, the social class composition of the student body in the various types of secondary school differed considerably with the academic high schools becoming the conventional middle-class route to university and the technical school a working-class route to early employment and, if students were lucky, apprenticeships. In all States pupils aged 12 now enter a common high school based upon the area in which they live. Victoria still maintains a distinction between high schools and 'technical' high schools but it appeared to the Examiners that the overlap in curricula has increased in recent years.

These changes have not occurred without controversy. There are broadly six main categories of criticism which are not always consistent with one another. It is claimed that:

i) the new neighbourhood high schools result in just as much socio-economic discrimination as earlier arrangements because the ethos of a school remains heavily dependent on the district in which it is situated;

ii) the changes are in fact more apparent than real and that de facto streaming does take place from the beginning of secondary education both between schools, for reasons mentioned above, and within schools;

iii) that the attempts at diversifying the curriculum especially at lower ages have the effect of closing off options to pupils before they are really experienced enough to appreciate the curriculum choices they are making and the occupational implications of these choices;

iv) that these changes, designed to reduce the academic pressures and intellectual competitiveness in schools, have resulted in lower levels of verbal and numerical attainment and a cavalier attitude to hard work;

v) that the curriculum in the eleventh and twelfth grades continues to be heavily academic and irrelevant to the needs of many students;

vi) that the existence of a substantial non-government sector, partly subsidised out of public funds, retards progress towards a more equitable and liberal system of secondary education in the government sector.

In our view educational change is a process of continuous evolution and no change is going to result in an educational service that is perfect for all time. The important question is whether any particular arrangement is susceptible to improvement at a particular period. Within this context we have formed views on some of the criticisms outlined above.

The transport of pupils from one area to another which is the only practicable way of altering substantially the socio-economic composition of individual schools has been shown in other countries to have many drawbacks and it is doubtful if it is worth experimenting with even in the most depressed inner city areas. We consider that the approach adopted by the Schools Commission of providing additional resources for schools with a high concentration of pupils from deprived family backgrounds is the right one and that as soon as economic circumstances allow the programme should be stepped up. We suggest, however, that more of these resources should be used for the provision of improved school buildings where necessary as well as for the provision of equipment and additional teaching staff. We were impressed by the evidence that many migrant families, especially those from non-English-speaking backgrounds, have high educational aspirations for their children and that the proportion of high achievers among migrants as a whole is not low. Where the absence of a mastery of the English language is an impediment to educational progress then clearly special remedial work is necessary and we were pleased to see that the Commonwealth authorities and those of many State governments have in recent years started special programmes to achieve this.

Streaming is a practice on which it is almost impossible to comment without a much more thorough examination of what is in fact going on in schools than was possible for us in the time at our disposal. Our general impression was that despite appearances to the contrary nearly all children do study the basic subjects of English and Mathematics up until the time they leave school, or the end of the tenth year, at least to a level commensurate with what teachers perceive to be their abilities and interests. It does not appear that pupils are prevented from taking high certificate or matriculation examinations because of ill-considered choices earlier in their school careers. Similarly, there can be very few pupils who are denied entry to tertiary education for this reason since entry to tertiary institutions is normally based on a consolidated score in whatever form of assessment takes place at the end of secondary education in that State and not on performance in individual subjects. Again, the much sought after faculties such as medicine are a partial exception to this rule, though even here we formed the impression that most medical faculties aimed to recruit what they considered to be the most able young people rather than those who had studied particular subjects.

Standards of literacy and numeracy and the effect of recent changes in secondary schools on the attitudes of young people to work and adult responsibilities was a topic on which we received much comment. Furthermore, there are fears in Australia, as in other countries, that the academic standards of students leaving all levels of education are falling and that they are no longer imbued with what has been called the work ethic. We return to this topic in the next chapter which discusses curricula in secondary schools.

However, one piece of general evidence that is significant is that many employers of apprentices and many TAFE institutions find it necessary, almost as a matter of course, to offer remedial Mathematics to their new recruits - and more importantly that they succeed in bringing them up to the required standard within a fairly short period.

Criticism of the non-government sector and of the public subsidy to institutions in this sector appeared to us remarkably muted. This may be because the major battles in this area have been fought over the last two decades. Nevertheless, allegations are made against the elitist tendencies of some schools in this sector. Several witnesses argued that in supporting independent schools which have a social cachet the Commonwealth Government is enabling a significant minority of parents to buy opportunities for their children that are not open to the great majority of their fellow citizens. The issue is complicated by the existence of large numbers of Catholic parochial schools in this sector which, as the Background Report shows, are relatively poorly staffed and have inadequate equipment to provide a full range of secondary education opportunities. Our only comment on this issue is to express the hope that the Schools Commission will be enabled to monitor very carefully the effects of its new financing formula for private schools to ensure that the funds do continue to go to schools where they are really needed. Whether the non-government schools act as a brake on curriculum change in government schools is impossible to say.

V

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Curriculum

As in many OECD countries, there has been in recent years in Australia a lively debate about the proper role for schools to perform in society and the necessity of introducing major curricular reforms. It has been recognised that traditional curricular models must be modified in response to four factors. First, there is general agreement that the principal object of the schools is to promote the total development of the young rather than to concentrate primarily on either intellectual or vocational training. Secondly, the tendency for many young people to stay at school beyond the compulsory leaving age without any intention or at least a firm intention to proceed to tertiary education implies that high schools must devise a curriculum which, while not impairing the prospects of those students who are seeking tertiary entrance, will match the needs of those who enter the work force during the upper secondary cycle or at the completion of the twelfth grade. Thirdly, the adoption since the Second World War of a non-selective school system necessitates catering for a broad range of intellectual abilities and a variety of individual aspirations. Fourthly, there is a desire, shared with most OECD national education systems, that each student should be given the opportunity to proceed at his own pace and to satisfy his own particular interests.

Curricular reforms have thus been governed by four guiding principles: (i) the need for diversity; (ii) the importance of institutional flexibility; (iii) removal of rigid attitudes and practices; and (iv) encouragement of school autonomy and community participation. At the Federal level in Australia, the Schools Commission has in recent years been anxious to promote equality by providing all schools with a basic minimum of resources so that they may strive for minimum standards of achievement. There is indeed talk of trying to attain a common plateau of achievement throughout Australia. Needless to say, considerable controversy surrounds this goal and the ways and means of reaching it.

Obviously, crucial to a resolution of this tension is the development of appropriate curricula. Yet so far discussions about the content of the curricula in relation to social equality are still in their infancy.

In theory, Australian secondary schools are organised comprehensively and there is no selection into a hierarchy of schools at the end of the primary phase, except in the State of Victoria, where some form of selection remains institutionalised at the age of 12. One obvious risk, of course, in separating young people at an early age into general education and technical streams is that vocational orientation may be neglected in the former and general education may be neglected in the latter. This danger is appreciated by educational planners in Australia and efforts are being made in nearly all State schools to include both general and vocational elements in the curriculum. Within Victorian technical schools, it is recognised that it is essential not to neglect general education and that young people should be introduced to a cluster of vocational skills rather than prepared for a specific occupation.

Our impression is that curricular reform is advancing at varying speeds both from State to State and within States from school to school and that, in general, operational practice is not always consistent with declared policy aims. The difficulty of shifting from a curriculum dominated by the demands of tertiary entrance to a more open one is not easily overcome. The curriculum of many schools appears to remain weighted towards traditional academic courses, notably in the non-government sector. For some independent schools, especially those catering for the higher socio-economic groups, this represents a deliberate choice. For others, it often results from the fact that the provision of a broadly based curriculum, including a large amount of vocational preparation, would be too costly to envisage. There is evidence that in comprehensive schools de facto streaming according to intellectual ability is widespread. One obstacle to reform along more egalitarian lines is that many teachers do not find it easy to change habitual teaching styles. Another obstacle is the understandable concern of parents that their children should not be deflected from traditional types of study which will lead to what they consider appropriate careers. In seeking recruits employers also tend to demand the type of school qualifications with which they are familiar.

The problem of devising a satisfactory school structure and curriculum is compounded by the fact that they must be designed to meet the needs of four distinct groups of school leavers:

i) those who will leave school at the completion of lower secondary education, that is, at or at about the minimum legal school-leaving age;

ii) those who leave school during the upper secondary cycle;

iii) those who leave school to enter the work force at the completion of the twelfth grade with or without tertiary entrance qualifications;

iv) those who will proceed to tertiary institutions.

By and large, the State systems and to a lesser extent the non-government schools have attempted to minimise the problem by distinguishing between the curriculum in the lower secondary and upper secondary levels. We shall comment separately on these two levels.

We understand that nearly all schools in Australia are attempting to treat the lower secondary cycle as independent of the upper secondary cycle. This entails an assumption that any child may be leaving school at the end of the tenth grade and that the curriculum in the lower secondary cycle should not be constrained by the entrance requirements of tertiary institutions. It can further entail the adoption of a wide range of interdisciplinary subjects, the delay of specialisation and the removal of any form of overt or hidden premature selection into ability groups.

In practice, we have the impression that, despite a variety of interesting reforms in teaching methods and materials, the substitution of broad guidelines to teachers in place of prescribed syllabuses and experiments with more flexible timetables and classroom arrangements, many schools have not so far departed significantly from the traditional curriculum. A large number of those who spoke to us expressed the view that the schools remain geared, even at this level, to tertiary entrance, despite formal appearances to the contrary. It would further seem that a preoccupation with long-term tertiary entrance is greater when school systems retain an examinable leaving certificate at the end of the tenth grade.

Irrespective of the tendency for tertiary entrance requirements to bear upon the curriculum within the lower secondary school, the large problem remains of how to reconcile the competing claims of broad educational aims with preparation for working life. Administrators, principals and teachers are fully aware that about half or more of their pupils will leave school at or at about the end of compulsory schooling. They also know that whereas a substantial minority of these leavers will take up apprenticeship or find jobs that offer potentially satisfactory careers, a good many more will enter the labour market doomed to take jobs that involve no particular training or skills and often in present circumstances to prolonged unemployment. Their task is not helped by the fact that the majority of their students are unwilling or unable to make a decision about what they want to do after compulsory education until well into the tenth grade. If the schools concentrate upon preparing for the labour market those students judged not to be of an academic bent, they are open to the accusation of foreclosing the students' options to proceed to the upper secondary cycle.

In the past, the States operated selective systems which ensured that a small minority of intellectually talented students received special educational opportunities, often in designated high schools. Most States have now abandoned this form of selection and adopted what is termed a comprehensive school system, although in practice some schools remain biased towards general education and others towards vocational education. In Victoria, as indicated above, the division between the technical high schools and what may be termed general schools remains clear cut. It is claimed on behalf of the Victorian system that the pupils in the technical schools appear to be highly motivated, that the teachers, many of whom are recruited from industry and commerce, are well qualified to provide practical instruction, that there is a uniquely close relationship between the schools and the labour market and that the young people leaving the schools appear to move relatively smoothly into jobs and especially into apprenticeships. It is also pointed out that it is perfectly feasible in principle to leave a technical school and re-enter the general education stream by taking part-time classes - that is, in theory, entry into a technical school at the age of 12 does not prevent a boy from subsequently embarking upon a tertiary career. In practice, however, it would seem that it is not all that easy for those leaving the technical schools to re-enter the general education stream. Moreover, the technical schools are oriented overwhelmingly towards the needs of boys. Most girls go to the general schools and it appears that those among them who are likely to leave school at 15 do not have the same opportunities for work preparation as the boys in the technical colleges.

Australia is not less successful than other countries in coping with the general education versus career preparation dilemma; indeed, it is probably performing better than many others. Nevertheless, further clarification of the aims of lower secondary education is called for and still more attention needs to be paid to curriculum planning.

At the upper secondary level, the main curricular problem appears to be how to satisfy the needs of those who will leave before completion of the twelfth grade and those who will complete the cycle but do not propose to proceed to tertiary education. Tertiary entrance is still a dominant consideration at this level in spite of the attempts of some school systems to devise their own syllabuses and modes of assessment. This results from at least three influences: the continuing pressure of tertiary entrance requirements in certain subject areas; the ingrained habits of subject teachers; the unrealistic aspirations of some young people and a great number of parents (we were frequently informed that many parents kept their children at school against their children's wishes). At the same time, it must be stated that a high proportion of schools offer an impressive array of subjects, often including technical and commercial subjects, and tertiary institutions have modified their admission requirements within recent years in direct response to the call for greater school autonomy. Moreover, there is an increasing tendency for the schools to evaluate the performance of pupils quite independently of the tertiary institutions.

There are two aspects of curricular reform that call for specific mention: the education of girls and the question of literacy and numeracy standards. It is generally appreciated by educationists that the future of girls is still being largely predetermined by their association with stereotyped social roles and occupations and that girls are disadvantaged in the labour market vis-à-vis boys. Although some attention is being paid to this problem, we reached the conclusion that more positive action is required.

Even during the short period we were in Australia, we remarked numerous references in the press and broadcasting media to an alleged overall decline in reading, writing and numeracy skills as well as in the oral expression of school leavers. We also met a number of employers, parents, teachers in tertiary institutions and not a few school teachers who complained that standards in basic skills had noticeably dropped during the past ten years or so. There was often the implication that new-fangled methods and the general permissiveness of teachers and parents lay at the root of the problem.

We ascertained that there was a lack of reliable empirical evidence to support these allegations. A survey just published by the Australian Council for Educational Research reveals that, although a good number of students performed badly in literacy and numeracy tests, the performance of the students as a whole was no worse than that of students in other OECD countries. For the rest, there appears to be no acceptable empirical basis for comparing over time the skills level of the present cohort of school leavers with that of school leavers in the fifties and early sixties.

The fact remains that a significant percentage of young people in the lower secondary schools lack reading and numeracy skills adequate for apprenticeships or technical and further education. Although this points to the necessity of paying increased attention to the acquisition of basic skills in the primary schools, it also indicates that the secondary schools are failing in their duty to prepare their charges for working life and that they need to take more active measures to tackle this problem.

Although noting some defects in the process of curriculum planning, we must emphasize that there is in Australia no lack of curricular support services. Each State system maintains a central unit concerned with curriculum design and the supply of new instructional materials. In addition, a Curriculum Development Centre has now been established at the Federal level. To judge from the declared aims of this Centre and its initial programme of work, there is every prospect that, in collaboration with the State education authorities, it will go far to suggesting solutions to some of the problems that we have identified.

Assessment

In our view the assessment of a pupil's progress and achievements by the schools rather than by a single external examination is a critical factor in the reform of upper secondary curriculum. Tertiary institutions must obviously reserve the right to stipulate prerequisites for certain courses and they are equally entitled to insist that incoming students should be demonstrably capable of pursuing their chosen courses of study. Employers also require a reliable guide to the quality and aptitudes of school leavers. Indeed, it is obvious that if the schools give no indication of the intellectual quality and personal characteristics of their graduates, tertiary institutions and employers will be compelled to devise examinations and other recruitment devices of their own. But so long as the education system can provide an accurate profile of each of its graduates by means of a carefully weighted statewide scoring system supported by teachers' references, it seems to the Examiners that school-based assessment is preferable to external assessment at the upper secondary level as a way of awarding credentials to young people who are making the transition from school to further education or working life.

We are aware that there is in Australia a current controversy over the merits and demerits of school-based assessment and that the terminal education scoring systems, not to speak of the methods of internal assessment, may well require improvement. But in view of the need to cater for an increasing proportion of young people in upper secondary education who will not proceed to traditional tertiary education, we feel that the schools will function more effectively when carrying out their own assessment and we therefore welcome the gradual trend to shift from external examinations to school-based assessment.

At the lower secondary level internal assessment is the rule and the examinations issue does not appear to raise problems except towards the terminal stage. Most States retain an examination at the compulsory school-leaving stage, which is manifestly used as a screening device for many types of occupation. We were not able to ascertain with any degree of authority what are the effects of such an examination upon the curriculum in lower secondary education, although a number of respondents claimed that it unduly influenced the structure of the curriculum and served as a de facto screening device for entry into upper secondary education. It was also suggested that their very fear of this examination hurdle led many young people to despair from an early stage of proceeding to upper secondary education. It seems to us that a general inquiry is called for into the whole question of the use and value of terminal examinations at the lower secondary level.

VI

EDUCATIONAL PATTERNS AND TRENDS IN THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We visited Australia during the most severe recession in the Western World since the 1930s. Throughout our visit newspapers and public opinion were extremely concerned about the increasing unemployment of all types - among the labour force in general, among unskilled workers, among skilled craftsmen, among graduates and among school leavers with and without educational qualifications.

There was, therefore, some temptation to view the concern with the transition from school to work primarily in terms of the abnormally high levels of unemployment among school leavers. It was a temptation we resisted because of the ample evidence that marked structural problems affecting young people have existed in the labour market over a fairly long period, and also because of our belief that transition problems are not necessarily overcome when everyone who leaves the education system finds a job of some sort very quickly.

One of the most useful pieces of evidence presented to us on this aspect of our review was a paper prepared for the National Training Council by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and since we are fully in agreement with it, and since it amplifies some of the material in the Background Report, the first few pages of this chapter rely heavily upon it.

There are two distinct dimensions to the youth employment problem in Australia. The first and most obvious reflects the severe effects of the recession on unemployment among young people, particularly the 15-19 age group. The second structural dimension is reflected in the long established tendency for the unemployment rate among the 15 to 19 year age group to be markedly higher than the adult rate. Since 1964, when continuous data first became available, the junior unemployment rate has been about three times the rate for adults. More recently, since the onset of the current economic recession, the imbalance has become more marked and now stands at about four times the adult rate. This pattern of events is common to almost all advanced western countries. The present high levels of youth unemployment are the result of severe cyclical unemployment superimposed on a worsening structural unemployment problem. In other words, unemployment

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among the young is not simply a result of the current general deficiency in labour demand. There is a further underlying dimension to youth unemployment which can be expected to persist irrespective of economic recovery and improved labour demand.

The present youth unemployment situation

At the end of May 1976, there were 103,000 persons under age 21 years registered as unemployed with the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES), including 20,100 school leavers. Total registered unemployment was 258,905. The severity of unemployment among the young is illustrated by the following statistics:

- the unemployment rate for persons under 20 years of age in May 1976 was 12.1, or more than 4 times the rate of 3.0 for those aged 20 and over;
- the unemployment rate among the under 20 age group has been in excess of 10% since November 1974;
- there were 35 young persons registered as unemployed for each vacancy for a young worker registered with the CES at end May, compared with an adult figure of about 9 unemployed per vacancy.

As a proportion of the total labour force the number of young people unemployed at August has been for the past 13 years as follows:*

1964	34.4
1965	31.9
1966	30.6
1967	27.2
1968	28.3
1969	27.8
1970	30.9
1971	27.8
1972	27.9
1973	30.7
1974	28.8
1975	35.1
1976	33.5

* SOURCE: Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Bulletins.

The incidence of unemployment is greater among some groups of young people than others. It is particularly severe for females, young people in non-metropolitan areas, Aborigines, and young people from families recently arrived in Australia. There also appear to be difficulties for young people in economically depressed inner city areas.

Females of all ages have experienced higher rates of unemployment than their male counterparts, and this is particularly the case with young females. In May 1976 the unemployment rate for females aged 15-19 years was 14% compared with 11% for males in that age group.

Non-metropolitan areas have long been characterised by a chronic structural unemployment problem. Even when general economic conditions have been buoyant and labour shortages have existed in the capital cities, these areas have continued to experience high unemployment. The unemployment rate for young persons 15-19 years is about 50% higher in non-metropolitan areas than in capital cities. At the end of May 1976 the unemployment rate in non-metropolitan areas for persons in this age group was nearly 16% compared with just over 10% in capital cities.

The unemployment rate for young males born overseas is generally higher than that for their Australian born counterparts. In November 1975 (the most recent statistics available) the unemployment rate among male teenage migrants was 18% compared with 14.1%* for Australian born males in the 15-19 age group. Lack of adequate information prevents accurate documentation of the employment problems facing young people in inner city areas. There are, however, good reasons to believe that the cumulative social disadvantages of young people in these areas - low socio-economic status, early school-leaving and high proportion of recent migrants - are leading to higher unemployment rates than elsewhere.

'Hidden' unemployment and 'under' employment

As with all groups in the labour market, the recorded unemployment rates do not tell the whole story about youth unemployment. Many young people stay at school in order to avoid unemployment and many young girls, especially in country areas, work in the home or on the farm.

Fluctuations in the number of school leavers entering the labour market owing to adverse economic conditions are part of a well established pattern. In each of the past two years it has been estimated that a considerable number of would-be school leavers have postponed their entry into the job market and remained at school for another year or returned to school after unsuccessfully attempting to obtain suitable employment.

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* It should be noted that these figures refer to a different date from that earlier in the paragraph and are not, therefore, strictly comparable.

Several comments might be made on the major consequences for the labour market of this pattern of behaviour. First, inflated school-leaver populations can be expected to seek employment in the next few years. Second, insofar as the young people postponing their entry into the labour market are receiving no meaningful addition to their marketable skills by way of vocational preparation and would prefer to be in the workforce, then their extra schooling is only a thinly disguised form of unemployment. Thirdly, this development may reinforce the tendency among employers to use higher educational qualifications as a selecting and screening mechanism in the recruitment of young workers. Finally, if employers do respond in this way, it will put at further disadvantage in a highly competitive labour market those young people leaving school with only minimal educational qualifications.

Although there is little statistical evidence available on young females who would otherwise be in the workforce but are compelled to stay at home or on the farm, there is little doubt that the economic downturn has contributed to an increase in their numbers. For instance, it has been estimated that 1 in 7 country school leavers normally move to capital cities to find employment. When job openings are generally reduced throughout the economy, this movement is obviously not open to many school leavers in the country.

The notion of 'under' employment refers to employment in jobs of lower status than those in which the person would normally find employment. Again, there is a paucity of data on the present extent of this phenomenon, but there is little doubt that it has become more widespread as the recession has deepened.

The reasons for the long-term rise in unemployment and potential unemployment among young people are complex and several different interpretations were put to us. One relates to the demographic factor. There was a very substantial rise in the proportion of young people in the labour force between 1950 and 1974. Secondly, there is the argument that the burden of employment adjustment when there are cyclical fluctuations or structural disequilibria in the economy falls most heavily on new entrants to the labour market, especially those without specific training or skills, but we do not see how this can affect the long run trend.

We also heard many criticisms of the fecklessness of young people as represented by the high rates of labour turnover among young workers. We are not certain, however, that this high turnover is entirely to be deplored since it is in some way a legitimate search activity by young people with very little previous experience of what working life is like, and furthermore we suspect that the boom conditions of the late 1960s and early 1970s may have resulted in an increased willingness by young people to leave one job before having arranged another. In this connection it is significant that labour turnover rates covering the 20 to 24 age group are higher than in the 15 to 19 age group. The tendency to change jobs might be expected to disappear during a recession when jobs are much harder to find.

It appears that there must be some more fundamental and perhaps less readily quantifiable factors at work which account for the growing long run trend of unemployment among young people.

There have been three developments in the Australian labour market in recent years which may be having an effect on the employment opportunities available for young people.

First, there has been a rapid increase in the labour force participation of married women, particularly in the kind of jobs in which they are competitive with the less well qualified school leavers. Many employers told us that they found such mature employees more 'reliable' than younger people in that they are punctual, have less absenteeism, are less likely to complain and are less likely to change jobs.

Secondly, many employers appear to be under the impression that a series of wage awards since the early 1970s have increased the cost of employing young people. Although we could find no solid evidence that there has been any marked rise in juvenile earnings relative to adults, the fact that this impression exists may be causing some employers to recruit experienced older workers in preference to inexperienced young workers. It would seem important to establish whether or not this impression is justified.

Thirdly, the incidence of 'voluntary' unemployment may be increasing because of increases in the amount of unemployment benefits payable to young people and the fact that benefits are available to young people who have never worked.

It seems to be generally agreed that future prospects for the employment of young people are not bright. The Department of Employment paper previously quoted concludes:

> "The immediate outlook indicates that the present high levels of youth unemployment are likely to persist for some time. Not only was the unemployment rate among teenagers higher (at 12.5%) in May 1976 than at the same time last year (10%), but
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> - there were substantially fewer vacancies for young people registered with the CES at end May 1976 than at the same time last year - 35 unemployed juniors for each vacancy in May 1976, compared with 20 in May 1975;

- some 200,000 secondary school leavers plus some 50,000 leavers from tertiary institutions are expected to seek entry to the labour market at the end of this year.

Even when there is a recovery in economic activity, unemployed young people are likely to be more slowly absorbed into employment (as the vacancy figures indicate) as employers first fully utilise existing staff, then take on experienced adult workers before turning to young persons.
Furthermore, in the event that skilled labour bottlenecks act as a brake on the rate at which overall demand for labour can be expanded in the recovery phase, then the prospects for abatement of youth unemployment will be further diminished.
The longer-term perspective equally contains indications which provide few grounds for optimism with respect to youth unemployment. These include:

- the prospect that the reduced apprenticeship intake over the course of the recession will manifest itself in future shortages of skilled labour which will further constrain the rate at which labour demand elsewhere can be expanded;
- the persistence of some of the factors thought to be underlying the long-term trend for youth unemployment - e. g. likely increases in female labour force participation (for the latest years available, Australia shares with Canada the third lowest rate of female participation of 10 highly industrialised OECD countries); and increased employment expectations of young females in particular, who are tending to stay at school longer in the hope of moving into a broader range of occupations;
- the continued decline expected in the employment growth rate in manufacturing industry and the slowness of educational systems to adjust to this change in opportunities for young people. "

On the basis of the written and oral evidence presented to us, we endorse this rather gloomy prognostication. It is within such a context, we believe, that the problems of transition from school to work must be studied and within which policies for the next decade must be planned.

There are two types of measures which can be used to help overcome these problems of youth unemployment. The first is to offer a direct subsidy to employers as an inducement to provide work for young people. As a palliative for some of the problems of severe cyclical unemployment we have no doubt that this is a measure which is worth trying. As a solution to the long-term problems we are more doubtful. It can create distortions in the labour market unless the subsidised jobs also contain a genuine training element and are not merely artificially created unskilled jobs. The younger workers whose jobs are subsidised will be older workers in a few years time and unless they have acquired some useful skills in the meantime their search for suitable long-term employment will have been merely delayed and possibly even made more difficult since by then they will be older and will be entitled to higher wage rates. The real solution to the problem of long-term youth unemployment must, we believe, lie with more effective arrangements for education and training in the light of the job opportunities that are likely to be available when economic growth resumes. It must of course be admitted that it is easier to say that this should be done than to prescribe how to do it.

Young people who leave school at or near the minimum school-leaving age and undertake no further study appear to comprise about a quarter of the age group. This group is less likely than others to undertake further training and more likely to have to accept low-paid jobs with few career prospects. Many of these youngsters leave school because they have been discouraged by their experiences of compulsory education. Imaginative programmes are required in order to induce them to undertake education and training after school. We saw little evidence that this requirement is at all widely appreciated.

To us there is an issue of principle involved here that touches upon the basic questions of what a government, and indeed a society as a whole through its governmental authorities and other agencies including employers and unions, feel to be the scope of their responsibility for the education and training of the younger generation.

Whereas the currently acute problems of youth unemployment were often in the foreground of our discussions and are of obvious policy concern, there was general agreement that the issue of transition from education to working life would be relevant even without the present cyclical difficulties. The thinking remained, however, largely within the present institutional structures: improvement of school curriculum, improvement and perhaps expansion of apprenticeship and similarly structured training programmes in TAFE and enterprises - and measures to provide and keep jobs for those who wanted a job immediately after leaving school at age 15 or 16, i. e. the group to which we refer here. There was a tendency to feel that it was really quite healthy for a youngster to go out and fend for himself in 'real life', as long as he could come back for more education when and if he wanted it.

There is a good deal of appeal in this rugged confidence in individual energy and the chances open to it in a rapidly developing society with great untapped resources. We wonder, however, whether, in the light of the current need for vocational specialisation and the importance of formal credentials, such a view is not unfair towards very many young people and against the long run interests of industry and society. In many respects, it means that a boy or girl of 16 is - from the point of view of finding his way in the world of work and understanding his position as a citizen - in the same position as if he were 36. We wish to argue the case for a continued responsibility to secure, not just to offer, structured educational and training experience to about the age of 18. We are referring in particular to the possibility of combining structured education or training courses in educational institutions and on the job, and we feel it important that this be regarded not only as a responsibility of the education and employment authorities, but of industry - employers and unions as agents of society - as well. Though this latter point is based upon a particular interpretation of the general responsibility of specific groups in society, it may be supported by a prognosis that we frequently heard expressed by representatives of these groups in Australia. Employers and union representatives both felt that the expected upturn of the economy would reveal - and might indeed be hampered by - a lack in qualified labour.

It appears to us that those who are fortunate enough to obtain apprenticeships are in many ways well catered for in terms both of educational provision and subsequent employment opportunities. Our only important question is whether present arrangements in Australia are not too rigid in present day conditions for both employers and employees and whether there would not be advantages in some trades at least in basing trade and craft training in technical colleges or formal training establishments rather than mainly in industry itself. We return to this issue later in this chapter.

Those youngsters who undertake further study beyond the minimum school-leaving age which is not strictly vocational or who do not go on to further study present some of the most difficult problems of all. They fall into several categories. Some undertake matriculation courses with the hope of entering tertiary education and fail. Our impression is that though this results in great disappointment and possibly serious employment problems, the numbers involved at present are not very large. The present situation in tertiary education appears to be such that almost all pupils who complete upper secondary education can find a tertiary course somewhere. Whether they are always well advised to do so is a matter on which we comment below.

Students in tertiary education were not our central interest. However, we feel that there should be more concern about the problem of dropping out of tertiary education. There is little purpose in expanding tertiary education if it results in relatively large numbers of young people dropping out along the way and acquiring a sense of failure that could be avoided if instead they were orientated at school towards further education courses more suited to their capabilities and interests. However, we approve of the trend towards what the Carnegie Commission has called 'stopping out' whereby students are able to take a positive decision to defer entry or discontinue their studies in the knowledge that there will be a real opportunity to return at a later date.

We are only slightly less anxious about many of the young people who are undertaking general courses of tertiary study. Where these are undertaken out of genuine interest and the student is fully aware that the course in itself is of little occupational value, this is highly desirable and deserves encouragement. We have a strong suspicion, however, that in the present situation of relatively easy entry into tertiary education many young people, encouraged by the buoyant labour market opportunities for graduates of the past two decades - particularly in the public sectors - may have unrealistic expectations about the opportunities that a degree will open up for them. Again, we believe that adequate information and counselling can contribute towards the avoidance of disappointment and hardship.

Those who are able to enter courses in medicine, law and other professional disciplines are the luckiest group of youngsters - a fact which they themselves certainly realise as is evidenced by the high demand for places in such disciplines. However, though the Examiners as a group are as sceptical of long-term manpower planning as most of the Australian officials we met, we would suggest that in areas such as medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, social work and above all teaching, serious efforts should be made to draw up some long-term perspectives - at least crude ones - otherwise there seems to be a likelihood of considerable frustration among graduates and waste of national resources. The situation in teacher training appears already to be critical with the emergence of a surplus of teachers almost certain and we wonder if any steps are yet being taken to forewarn the large numbers of young people for whom a job as a teacher still seems to be a desirable objective.

Apprenticeship

Although apprentices are a relatively favoured group of young people, particularly in present economic circumstances, the whole system of indentured apprenticeship is under challenge. The challenges are more marked in some States than in others and in certain industries and they come from two sources. Some employers claim that the costs of training are excessive in certain trades and industries and that they cannot increase apprenticeship posts and may well have to reduce them in the long run. The reductions imposed by recession may become permanent in some firms. Other employers state that the form of the National Apprenticeship Assistance Scheme (NAAS) should be changed. Instead of a subsidy for additional apprentices taken on, they would prefer the payment to cover the costs to firms of the time apprentices spend at technical colleges. It is argued that the total cost to Government would be no higher than at present. However, the cost would be greater if there was an expansion in the number of apprentices. Since the expansion of numbers is the purpose of Commonwealth apprenticeship subsidies, the present marginal approach seems necessary, although the absolute amount of the subsidy could be increased.

It seems to us that Australia may be at the point where the industries which rely on apprenticeship should be required to ensure that all firms either offer an appropriate number of apprenticeship posts or pay a tax for each vacant place. We wonder whether some of the excessive job mobility among young people about which many employers complained is not a result of 'poaching'. A reduction of poaching and an increased supply of skilled workers might be immediate results, but improved training methods could also be anticipated.

There is also a considerable group in Australia which feels that apprenticeship is no longer the most suitable form of training in many occupations and should be replaced either by more concentrated full-time technical college courses or by on-the-job training of a briefer and less formal type, accompanied by part-time attendance at technical colleges. The spread of apprenticeship to new types of industries is particularly suspect. Some of the main complaints about apprenticeship in Australia which were pointed out to us are set out below:

- the identure relationship is outmoded and is disappearing in nearly all other countries;
- training is too long - but some employers say they cannot recoup investment if it is shortened. Some think a fifth year of training is needed for this purpose;
- small firms do not offer all-round or good training;
- many enter apprenticeship simply in order to have an opportunity to become small businessmen and not primarily to practice a trade;
- industries do not need all-round craftsmen as they once did;
- wastage during training and afterwards is considerable;
- the system precludes much training for those youth who missed the opportunity to enter apprenticeship by about 17, and is restrictive as to adult training and retraining;
- State and Federal wage awards are restrictive on terms of apprenticeship.

It is our view, based on the evidence we received, that the apprenticeship system has served Australia well and that it should not be swept away unless something better is put in its place. However, we do consider it significant that in many other countries there is a tendency for employer-based apprenticeship arrangements to be on the one hand more organised and systematically related to training needs and, on the other, supplemented or replaced by training schemes which are based in educational and training establishments. If the TAFE sector is strengthened, as we advocate elsewhere in this report, such a shift will become more practicable.

We believe that in some trades the length of apprenticeship could be made more flexible and in many ways its quality could be improved if more extensive use were made of pre-apprenticeship courses of various kinds.

Credentialism

The great expansion of upper secondary and higher education in the late 1960s and early 1970s left employers in Australia as elsewhere confused about the meaning of various educational qualifications. On the one hand, they complain about the lack of relevance of many educational qualifications for the jobs that are available; on the other, they are showing an increasing tendency to use educational qualifications as a preliminary screening device in deciding the eligibility of young people for certain types of jobs. We heard a considerable amount of evidence that, in practice if not always in principle, many employers are requiring much higher levels of educational qualifications than previously from their recruits - particularly in white collar occupations.

At the same time educationists in Australia are becoming increasingly restive about the tendency for young people to see their secondary and tertiary education merely as a scramble for credentials, as we saw in Chapter V, and many attempts are being made in the various States to reduce the number and importance of external examinations. Queensland has gone furthest in this direction and has abolished external examinations in secondary schools altogether. However, it has become apparent that this does not prevent the use by employers of educational attainments as screening devices. Employers showed considerable anxiety about the abolition of external examinations and the Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies has just issued a report for employers explaining what its new junior and senior school certificates mean in academic terms. The purpose is to enable employers to interpret these reports correctly on the assumption that they will use them anyhow. The report also includes some warnings to employers about using other criteria to judge potential employees.

Like all who have attempted a serious study of credentialism, in practice we do not see any easy solution to the question raised in Australia. We are impressed by the attempts in Australia to free secondary school curricula from the constraints of external examinations, but believe that employers also have a legitimate claim to expect the education system to be able to provide information about the likely suitability of individuals for particular jobs. This must be one aspect of any attempt to integrate education and employment policies which it is one of the main aims of the present report to advocate.

VII

TAFE, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND RECURRENT EDUCATION

In terms of the resources devoted to it, Technical and Further Education (commonly referred to in Australia as TAFE) is the smallest sector of public education, accounting in 1974/75 for about 6% of total education expenditure compared with 10% in the Colleges of Advanced Education and 13% in the universities. At the same time TAFE has more than twice as many enrolments as the universities and Colleges of Advanced Education combined. This is the basis of the complaint we heard repeated many times throughout Australia that TAFE is the Cinderella of Australian education - with the unspoken implication that it was high time she was taken to the ball.

In attempting to evaluate such assertions it is necessary first to be sure that valid comparisons are being made. At the time of our visit the amount of statistical information available about TAFE in Australia as a whole was completely inadequate and we were pleased to hear that one of the priority tasks which the Federal Technical and Further Education Commission (TAFEC) has set itself is the creation of a reliable data base.

What is known at present is that the figure of 590,000 enrolments in TAFE institutions as compared with 250,000 in the universities and CAEs give a misleading impression of the student load in the two sectors. In the first place TAFE figures refer to enrolments in individual courses, not students, and a substantial but unknown number enrol for more than one course. Secondly, 95% of TAFE enrolments (in 1974) are part-time or correspondence students compared with 30% in universities and 38% in Colleges of Advanced Education. Thirdly, the drop out rate is high.

However, when all allowances have been made for double counting, there is no question that TAFE is providing education and training opportunities for a large segment of the population. Moreover, we were informed in several States that TAFE could not offer places to all those who wished to take courses and that there were certain courses, including courses for apprentices, for which there was a demand but which it lacked the resources to supply. We therefore think that it is important to verify the claim in the Background Report that "despite the high enrolments in TAFE courses compared to those offered by tertiary institutions and despite the fact that TAFE is a major agency for training skilled workers at a variety of levels and for providing recurrent education opportunities, the sector has received a much less favourable allocation of financial resources than other sectors of education". (Paragraph 4.31). We believe that the philosophy behind TAFE as set out for example in paragraphs 4.7 and 4.9 of the Background Report is one of the central issues of our report and offers the possibility of solutions to some of the complex problems of providing a system of post-secondary education for students who do not have the immediate aim of proceeding to tertiary education as well as providing sub-tertiary recurrent education opportunities for adults. However, we are not at all sure that the difficulties involved in developing this sector of education as a solution to the transition problems we were examining have been satisfactorily thought through either in Australia as a whole or in the individual States. It is not appropriate in our report to attempt to duplicate descriptive material contained in the Background Report. It is, however, important for an appreciation of the issues involved to have a general understanding of the somewhat complicated position of TAFE in Australian education.

As shown in Chapter III universities and CAEs are now financed entirely by the Commonwealth Government - the universities having direct dealings with Canberra, the CAEs through State boards or commissions that have different names in the various States. This assumption of complete financial responsibility by the Central Government is a recent development and a modification of the constitutional principle that the States have responsibility for educational provision.

The CAE sector was created in the mid-1960s in much the same way as the polytechnics in the United Kingdom and for much the same overt reasons. Most were formed out of parts of existing technical colleges and teacher training colleges. The aim was to concentrate advanced level vocational education in these institutions and thus create a sector that in the United Kingdom phrase had 'parity of esteem' with the universities but was more amenable to what were perceived as social, and particularly manpower needs. Not unnaturally the technical colleges that were not designated as Colleges of Advanced Education felt that their work had been downgraded and undervalued. There was the added complication in Australia that prior to the establishment of the CAE system the colleges had been administered directly by State Departments of Education (or special Departments of Technical Education) whereas afterwards in each State they entered into a more or less direct relationship with the Federal Government. Thus the work of the State Departments in this area was very sharply reduced. Both of these developments outlined have left a residue of discontent among some TAFE administrators and teachers that they were not slow to voice to the Examiners.

At the same time the Colleges of Advanced Education are experiencing their own difficulties. They were created (at the same time as several new universities) during a period of rapid expansion of demand for tertiary education and were encouraged to shed that part of their work below degree and diploma level. At the same time there were various pressures on some CAEs to drop a substantial portion of their part-time work. The general effect of these pressures appears to have been to create a feeling of competitiveness, for students and resources, between the universities and the colleges. As far as student preferences are concerned a very definite 'pecking order' seems to have emerged in each State (as revealed by the tertiary education selection procedures) with the old established universities at the top of the list, followed by a small number of well established Colleges of Advanced Education. Then come most of the newer universities and a few more Colleges of Advanced Education with a long tail of colleges of various kinds at the end. Of course, certain specialisations within a given institution often enjoy a distinction higher than the general status of the institution.

In recent years the growth of demand for higher education has been slower than anticipated and some of the institutions in the bottom half of the pecking order have had some difficulty in filling their places. An additional complication is the slowly spreading realisation that there will have to be very soon some reduction in the number of teachers in training; many of the colleges with a large teacher training component are already attempting to diversify their courses. The net result is that having in their early years been under suspicion for 'poaching' in the preserves of the universities, the Colleges of Advanced Education are now suspected in certain cases of trespassing in some of the para-professional and even pre-tertiary and post-trades training that the TAFE institutions have been developing as their own special preserve.

TAFE really undertakes two major activities lumped together for administrative and financial purposes: first, specific vocational preparation for apprentices, technicians and various sub-professional groups and, secondly, the provision of further education, the main focus of which at present appears to be courses of adult education not leading to specific vocational qualifications and various courses for adults and others who have left school before passing the twelfth year examination to prepare them for entry to tertiary education.

Each State has adopted a somewhat different way of administering the complex of institutions that constitute post-secondary education and TAFE. At the Federal level there are the three separate commissions described in Chapter II; in Western Australia an attempt is being made to link all post-secondary education (including universities) under the responsibility of one commission; in South Australia and New South Wales there are separate departments of Technical and Further Education. In Victoria, technical colleges are closely linked to the schools through the long established system of technical high schools. In many ways in fact Australia is one vast laboratory of experimentation in this area. However, there does not appear to be much evaluation of the results of the experiments. Some administrators seemed to know more about short cycle institutions in other OECD countries than about TAFE in neighbouring States.

Alternative routes to post-secondary education

Through the universities and Colleges of Advanced Education and through that segment of TAFE that provides structured technical training, Australia provides substantial opportunities for further and higher education for young people whose experience of basic education has been reasonably successful. Opportunities such as Tertiary Orientation Courses are also available for young adults to make up deficiencies in secondary education such as failure to take Higher School Certificate and so qualify for entry to tertiary education.

One of the main themes of our report is that opportunities are much less plentiful for those young people who leave school at or around the minimum school-leaving age and this group is much less likely to take advantage of the opportunities that are available.

Despite the many current nostrums circulating around the concept of recurrent education there are no easy solutions to this problem. Many of the young people involved dislike school and school-type institutions which is the main reason why they left school as soon as they possibly could. It is an observed fact that those people who have benefited most from their initial education are the ones most likely to take advantage of later opportunities. Though there are always some young people in their late teens and twenties who regret having left school early and subsequently seek tertiary orientation and similar courses in TAFE, the great majority appear to be impervious to all blandishments even when their lack of qualifications is an obvious disadvantage in the job market. It is, therefore, not sufficient simply to provide opportunities for recurrent education as an offset to early leaving.

We believe that the education and employment authorities should have a responsibility for making some suitable provision - which would probably normally be on a part-time basis and linked either to the employment of young people or their unemployment benefit - for all young people up to the age of 18. One of the main emphases of this provision, particularly for those young people disillusioned with formal full-time education, should be to prepare them for subsequent recurrent education.

Although in Australia as a whole very few pupils leave school before turning 15, at least two States do permit young people to leave school before the minimum school-leaving age if it can be shown that they have reasonable justification for doing so. Permission to do this is strictly regulated, but our impression is that it is more widespread than some administrators are prepared to admit. In our view this is a dubious practice and the suggestion sometimes made that it should be extended should be treated with the utmost caution. These young people are the least likely to undertake subsequent education and training and in our opinion if permission is given for early leaving it should be on the grounds that the young person has made alternative educational or training arrangements that are better for him or her personally than remaining at school.

There is a good case in Australia for the creation of a network of community colleges catering for the further education needs of the whole local community from remedial work in literacy and numeracy up to degree level work. At present further education opportunities at the lower levels hardly exist and at the middle and higher levels they are shared between TAFE institutions, Colleges of Advanced Education and universities. The present diversity of provision appears to work reasonably well in the large metropolitan areas which are big enough to support one or more universities, several CAEs and a large number of TAFE colleges. In the State capitals, nearly all young people with reasonable formal educational qualifications are able to find some courses relevant to their needs and interests and leading to a qualification with some intrinsic or extrinsic value.

Even in the large cities, however, we suspect that many young people experience difficulties in making a wise choice between the various institutions that are competing for their custom. There is in most of the major cities at the present time excess capacity in some of the tertiary institutions that are low in the pecking order of student preferences. We saw evidence in some places of competitive bidding by different institutions for the custom of fifth and sixth formers as well as some competition for adult students. Such competition can be healthy for students (though possibly wasteful of public funds) provided that the students are adequately counselled about the competitive claims that are being made. We are, however, somewhat concerned that a number of students appear to drop out of universities and colleges simply on the grounds that the course is not what they expected it to be. We believe there is a danger that this syndrome could become more serious unless attempts are made centrally in each State capital to coordinate the course offerings of the various tertiary institutions and to counsel school students and intending adult students accordingly.

Outside the major cities we believe that the present situation, and in particular the split between TAFE institutions and CAEs, can lead to a waste of resources. We were very pleased to discover that the community college concept is beginning to take root in Australia. However, there are few communities outside the main metropolitan areas that can be expected to support more than a single community college.

While, therefore, the present split between universities, CAEs and technical colleges is probably viable in the main metropolitan areas, providing there is some co-ordination of provision, we are doubtful about the attempt to maintain three separate categories of institution in most of the rest of the country. Specific solutions must depend on the particular circumstances in each community - some larger cities can clearly sustain a university and at least one community college, but our point of principle is that the issue should be seen as one in which all the sectors of post-compulsory education are involved and not merely as a way of developing new functions and a new sense of purpose for TAFE. In some areas we suspect that the appropriate institution on which to build is a College of Advanced Education, in others it will be a TAFE college or federation of colleges. In still others it may be a new university. What we believe needs careful watching is the artificial barriers created by the different methods of financing and administering the three sectors of post-secondary education.

We would also stress that the concept of a community college is of an educational institution that has something to offer all members of the community and not only those who have already had some success in conventional formal education.

VIII

CAREERS EDUCATION AND TRANSITION SERVICES

We are impressed by the widespread desire throughout Australia to enlarge, improve and enrich the information, guidance and placement services for young people who must make important educational and occupational decisions at the end of their compulsory education and in the years that follow. Although the situation varies between States there are normally at least three overlapping sets of arrangements for educational and occupational information and counselling. First, many high schools in Australia have at least one staff member who is designated as a careers teacher. While this is usually treated as a full-time job and the person so designated may also offer classes in careers education, sometimes the careers teacher may simply be a member of staff relieved of teaching duties for a few hours a week. Again, although in principle most States offer special training for careers teachers we formed the view that for a great number of them the amount of training received is negligible or non-existent.

Secondly, counselling services are sometimes provided by State Departments of Labour or Education. The main functions of these services are to provide psychological testing and personal guidance interviews for individuals.

Thirdly, the Commonwealth Employment Service provides facilities to inform young people from the ninth year upwards of the type of job opportunities available and the routes into them - as well as providing a career counselling and job placement service.

In a paper presented to the Examiners the Department of Employment claimed that:

> " The education system must take an increasing responsibility for the preparation of all students for working life. The Department has noted the encouraging signs of a growing emphasis on Career Education and Guidance in the secondary school systems throughout Australia, with the appointment of larger numbers of full and part-time career officers in secondary schools and development of 'in-service' training programmes to support these officers. The Department sees an individual's preparation for entry to work or further study as a continuous developmental process. This process should logically be supported in the context of the school

setting, where ongoing access to young people is practical. The 'episodic' type of assistance traditionally used in preparation of young people for work has proved inadequate to meet the developmental needs which exist.
The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations sees the trend for increasing involvement in career guidance by the Education system continuing, and sees its own role as supportive of this trend. Future activities of the Department will be directed towards:

- provision of up-to-date and comprehensive occupational information in printed and audio-visual form for use by young people in their career decision-making;
- assistance in training of education department staff and support for 'in-service' training programmes concerning matters close to this Department's expertise in career guidance;
- direct assistance to educational leavers in finding employment;
- provision of vocational counselling for those who, having had access to broadly based career guidance programmes in their schools, experience difficulties in making vocational choices and who require additional assistance, either during or following their education;
- development resources such as 'Career Planning Packs' which can be of assistance to schools in the implementation of career education programmes."

In general we were impressed with what we saw of the work being undertaken by the Commonwealth Employment Service in its careers centres and elsewhere and believe that the approach to counselling and transition services outlined above is the right one. However, we believe that all such approaches have certain limitations.

There is general agreement in Australia that current provision of counselling and information services for secondary school students is variable and inadequate. Not only are the services offered by the Commonwealth through the Employment Service of varying strength from State to State, but they are far from uniform within each State. Even more uneven is the provision which depends on State financing and organisation, since individual schools are free to devise their own programmes and they may devote varying quantities of teacher hours to careers education and transition services. In this field such diversity may be both uneconomic because of the duplication of thought and effort and unfair to young people because of variations in the availability of services.

It is not lack of knowledge or ingenuity which weakens the effort; there are probably no procedures in careers education or in information, guidance and placement services known to other countries which have not been tried out somewhere in Australia. The problem in Australia appears to be rather one of increasing the total amount of services, gaining acceptance for them as part of the educational enterprise, disseminating information throughout the country about the methods shown to be most effective, providing differentiated services to meet the needs of special groups of young people, establishing centralised leadership rather than permitting individual schools to create individual systems, co-ordinating the activities of education and employment agencies in this key operation of the transition process, increasing the number and quality of personnel, and providing services to young people in a continuous rather than episodic fashion over a number of years which span both school and work.

Present provision is too fragmented and this, in some instances at least, appears to lead to competition arising between different authorities which we believe must be confusing for at least some of the young people who wish to use the services. Research and evaluation studies could be expanded almost everywhere, and agencies which can facilitate the sharing of results are needed within and across the States.

What we feel is especially needed in Australia is a rethinking of the role of the various kinds of guidance and counselling services in the context of the total curriculum of the schools and the needs of young people both inside and outside formal educational institutions. We were able to see a draft of the report of a National Committee on the Transition from School to Work which has focussed on this issue and evidently the committee has made a useful start in this direction.

There are at least five separate functions in the area of guidance and counselling which we believe can best be provided on a co-ordinated basis: general awareness by young people of the practical aspects of life outside the school; specific information about the range of job opportunities available and what is required to obtain them; realistic assessment of students' capabilities and potentialities; placement in jobs and the exercise of some kind of loose pastoral responsibility for young people during their early years of employment.

We feel it is insufficiently realised throughout Australia that all these activities are to some extent inter-related. It is not possible for a study of the type we have been able to undertake to make specific recommendations and this is not one of the objects of the review. However, we are strongly of the opinion that it is necessary to establish a co-ordinating agency for the provision of transition services for young people from about the eighth or ninth year of schooling till the time that they are settled in satisfactory employment. This would be an ambitious undertaking, involving State and Federal education and employment agencies and co-operation between school and TAFE authorities, but the situation in Australia is probably ripe for such a major initiative. Although we have emphasized in Chapter VI that we do not believe the present high level of unemployment among young people is the central problem of the transition issue, it does focus public attention on an important set of issues which are likely to be ignored by public opinion in more prosperous times.

In establishing such agencies we believe that there are a number of basic principles to be borne in mind:

1) There needs to be in each average-size secondary school at least one full-time, properly trained specialist with a responsibility for careers education in its broadest sense. Careers education should appear as a compulsory subject on the schools timetable at least during years nine and ten.

2) There are many economies to be realised, as well as the provision of a better service for young people, by organising the information services on as wide a geographic basis as possible. It should be possible to create a statewide system that comprises local community initiatives and is linked to similar systems in other States.

3) It is important in any such activity that employers and trade unions should be closely involved at all levels.

4) We believe that the way in which the job information and placement services now operate, although making some use of video-tape and microfilm facilities, is excessively labour intensive and that an investigation should be made into the possibility of using statewide and possibly countrywide educational and occupational information systems. These can perhaps be combined with guidance and job vacancy elements. All should allow for local variations in the information provided.

We conclude this chapter with a few comments on the work experience schemes for school students which are being experimented with in a number of States and for which the Victorian Parliament has passed an enabling Act. Here again we fell that neither the aims and objectives of such schemes nor the practical problems of implementation have been properly thought out.

The main point to be established is that work experience schemes of the type being envisaged represent essentially an educational experience and are not a preparation for a specific job. Their main purpose is, or should be, to help children to relate their school experiences to the world in which their parents live, which they see and hear discussed in the media and in which they themselves will have to live. They can also help acquaint students with working conditions in at least a limited range of jobs. As such, work experience schemes can play an important role in broadening understanding of the working environment, of social relationships, and of the actual conditions of working life, besides helping students to evaluate the real utility of the careers information they receive from other sources.

It is important that work experience schemes should be arranged jointly by groups of schools and employers in a particular region so that there is no harmful competition for places. Schools should share experiences about the value of particular placements.

One important function that work experience schemes can help to accomplish is to broaden the views of both boys and girls about the possible range of jobs they might consider entering. Girls could find out that being an engineering apprentice does not necessarily mean a loss of feminity and boys might discover that male nurses or typists do not necessarily lack virility. This is all the more likely if work experience takes place in settings where sex stereotyping in jobs has already been challenged.

There appears to be a tendency at the moment for such schemes to concentrate especially on factory work. We see no reason why this should be so. Government agencies and community services such as hospitals and shops and offices can all provide educationally valid work experience. Work experience schemes should not be considered as only appropriate for low achievers and those who appear likely to leave school early. Properly designed work experience schemes would be an important part of the careers education curriculum of all young people recommended in an earlier paragraph.

We must conclude this chapter by acknowledging once again the considerable attention being devoted by the States to the development of careers education and some of the transition services and the efforts being made by the Commonwealth Employment Service under adverse staffing conditions. What we feel to be necessary in general is more co-ordination of the services provided, more involvement of the community, especially employers and trade unions, and more analysis of the way in which the various transition services can fit together.

We would also like to record our general view that orientation of school leavers to the needs of the labour market is not the only adaptation that is possible or desirable. Employers should be willing to examine their career structures in the light of changing educational patterns. For example a hierarchical, managerial pattern that is appropriate where only a few per cent of the population have higher education may be less effective when the figure rises to 20% or more.

IX

DISADVANTAGED AND POTENTIALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Our terms of reference required us to examine especially "the provision of particular programmes and opportunities to assist the transition from school for special groups such as Aborigines, migrants and the handicapped".

When we began to examine the issue of educational disadvantage it became apparent that there were at least three other categories of young people who were actually or potentially disadvantaged compared with the population as a whole - those in rural areas, those from poor families and females.

Handicapped young people

In the time available we were unable to obtain much information about the opportunities available for physically and mentally handicapped people and none of it is applicable to Australia as a whole. This is one of the few areas also in which the Background Report is deficient of information.

However, we recognise that this is a priority area and that substantial general and specific programmes have been mounted by both Federal and State governments within recent years to assist the education, rehabilitation and integration into the community of this disadvantaged group. In addition, we support the educational policy, which has been widely adopted, of integrating the school experience of handicapped persons with the ordinary curricular experience for all pupils. Vocational education for the handicapped in either the ordinary school situation or even in special institutions is still extremely limited. The inadequate data base on the vocational educational problems of the handicapped makes it impossible for us to make a valid comparison with provision in other OECD countries. Equally, data were not available on the extent to which employers make (or are required to make) special efforts to recruit and train a certain proportion of handicapped young people, as is the case in some other OECD countries. We believe that these issues should be studied in depth in the formulation of future education and training policies for the handicapped.

Aboriginal youth

The preparation of young Aborigines for work and post-compulsory education presents a number of problems, some of which have parallels in other countries and some of which are unique to Australia. There is a long history of hostility between white Australians and the Aborigines. This had been a product mainly of rivalry over land rights and the clash of two very different cultures. Attitudes towards Aborigines have changed very considerably in recent years and there is at present a genuine concern among many groups of Australians to make good two centuries of indifference and enmity. One of the main ways of attempting to achieve this is through the school system.

There are approximately 133,000 Aborigines in Australia, that is about 1% of the total population.* About half of them live in tribal reserves in various parts of the country and about half live in towns or villages where the population is predominantly white. Among this latter group are a very large number of mixed blood. The 'Aboriginal Problem' is thus in effect two problems - that of the tribal Aborigine still maintaining his largely traditional way of life and that of the urbanised Aborigine living usually on the fringes of white society. There is not a hard and fast dividing line between the two groups, and indeed, for various reasons, young Aborigines move back and forth between the tribal 'reserves' and the towns. However, for our purposes it is convenient to think of them in the two groups.

It was not possible in the circumstances to examine the educational problems of the tribal Aborigines. We did, however, devote some attention to the educational opportunities available to young Aborigines not long off tribal reserves. Educational responsibility for this group is shared between State Education Departments and the Commonwealth Department for Aboriginal Affairs. The latter is charged with the task of implementing the assistance programmes for Aborigines which have been accepted by the Commonwealth in the execution of its constitutional responsibility in all matters relating to Aboriginal welfare.

It has been usual for Aboriginal children to leave school much earlier than their white counterparts and very few indeed have proceeded to tertiary study. It is difficult to distinguish cause and effect in an area such as this, but early school leaving has been accompanied by high levels of unemployment and an inability to cope socially. We received verbal evidence which indicates that there is also a high incidence of failure among the very small number of Aborigines taking up apprenticeships.

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* There is some uncertainty about the number of people who are Aborigines as the test for determining certain government grants is for a person to consider himself an Aboriginal and to be recognised as such by the Aboriginal community.

The Commonwealth Government appears to be well aware of such problems and its policies in recent years have been extremely generous in seeking to guarantee that a new generation of Aborigines may, if they wish, play a full role in Australian society. Generous grants are available to encourage Aboriginal children to continue at school and special scholarships are available for tertiary study. Some evaluations of the schemes are now available and indicate, as in other countries, that progress is being made but painfully slowly. For example, the recently completed Watts Report has shown that the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme has had some success in encouraging students to remain longer at secondary school but early leaving is still prevalent and a very high proportion of students are still placed in classes for the less academically orientated. Moreover, we received other evidence suggesting that Aboriginal students do not receive the same stimulus to succeed in school as their white peers.

A relatively new trend is for Aboriginal students and their parents to aspire to 'a good job'. It was pointed out to us, however, that their expectations are often unrealistically high. This would seem to demonstrate the very great need for efficient guidance and counselling facilities.

Given the relatively small number of young people involved and the obvious existence of specific social disadvantages resulting from cultural background and poverty, our view is that the present policy of offering financial incentives to young Aborigines to stay on at school and tertiary study should be sustained. In addition, policies should be devised which maximise the training opportunities offered to Aborigines by employers.

Migrants

Australia is, of course, a country of immigrants and the word migrant is used with a variety of meanings. Sometimes it refers to anyone who was not born in Australia and sometimes it refers to someone from a cultural background that is not Anglo-Saxon whether he was born in Australia or not.

Alongside a growing awareness that Australia is a multicultural society there appears to be an increasing consciousness among various ethnic groups of their separate identities. We heard many complaints about the disadvantages suffered by migrant youths in education and employment and we were able to examine a number of research reports on this topic.

From our own enquiries, and the evidence of the Poverty Commission*, we reached the conclusion that the group of migrants that suffer the most serious educational disadvantages are young people with a non-English-speaking background who came to Australia from about the age of 10 or upwards. Their problems are exacerbated if their earlier schooling was of a poor standard and marked by disruption.

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* This Commission, which was set up several years ago, has the task of enquiring into the nature and extent of poverty in Australia.

There are many programmes of special language instruction and in most States in each school where there is any substantial proportion of children with language difficulties there is at least one teacher with a qualification in this area. There are not necessarily, however, teachers with knowledge of the languages concerned, especially for the smaller ethnic groups for whom the problems may be most serious.

We were impressed by the evidence that many non-English-speaking migrant children are high aspirers as compared with Australian children and are on the whole high achievers as well.

The situation is confused because a high proportion of children of recent migrants, for obvious reasons which are not our immediate concern, come from poor families of low socio-economic status. Our view is that their problems should be seen as deriving mainly from their low socio-economic status rather than their cultural origins.

One relatively minor matter we consider worthy of comment is the failure in some States to recognise certain categories of ethnically orientated studies as matriculation subjects. We understand, for example, that despite the huge number of Greeks in Melbourne there was a considerable struggle before modern Greek studies were recognised as a matriculation subject. If this is so, we feel that it is possible that a number of smaller ethnic minorities may be at some disadvantage and the accrediting bodies in the various States might consider possible solutions.

Rural youth

In Chapter II we drew attention to the fact that while most Australians live in cities, a significant minority live in smaller communities. Because of the vast size of the country many young people are geographically isolated and have no access to the kind of balanced labour market that would provide jobs and reasonable career opportunities. It is furthermore difficult to provide a wide range of training in small isolated communities. The educational and employment disadvantages of young people in isolated rural areas are less widely publicised than those of some other groups but nonetheless real. Their problems relate to both cultural deprivation and the lack of post-compulsory education opportunities and employment. There is some evidence of educational disadvantage in the lower grades of secondary school. However, we believe that the main disadvantage of young people in rural areas lies in the absence of appropriate post-compulsory education opportunities, particularly below degree and diploma level. These educational disadvantages are reinforced by the shortage of jobs and the lack of training places in firms. The present employment opportunities for girls living beyond commuting distance of the main metropolitan areas seem to be severly limited as they are also in some of the cities that depend mainly on heavy industry such as Wollongong and Newcastle.

Part of the problem is due, of course, to the present world recession which has hit certain farming sectors and mining and heavy industry particularly hard. However, some of the difficulties are quite clearly structural, especially those facing girls in farming areas and in cities dependent on heavy industry. We live in an era in which most people no longer consider it satisfactory for girls simply to stay at home till they are married. Ways must be found of providing suitable employment and training opportunities for them.

Socio-economic disadvantage and early leavers

In examining the written and oral evidence presented to us we formed a clear impression that the main causes of educational disadvantage are, as elsewhere in the world, poverty and low socio-economic status. These affect many young people other than the groups identified above in a variety of ways. Family aspirations are lower, parents are less well informed about the education and training opportunities available, students tend to be educated in low status schools, the influence of peer groups tends to militate against further study and training, the cultural and intellectual background of the children is different from that of the majority of the teachers, and the schools for the most part are staffed by the least able teachers because in general the more able teachers seek opportunities in the more attractive schools. The list of causes of disadvantage is a long one and similar in Australia to other industrial societies. Most of them have been thoroughly documented by such authorities as the Schools Commission and the Poverty Commission.

Socio-economic disadvantage derives from so many determining factors that any simple solution is certain to be inadequate. We were especially concerned about those young people who leave school without realising their true educational potential and without the desire or the possibility of undertaking further training of any kind. Studies by various authorities suggest that only a fairly small minority of these - not more than 10% - leave for reasons of financial stringency. This suggests that while additional financial support for young people from very poor families has some effect it will not solve by itself the problem of early leaving.

Many more students - perhaps 40% - are dissatisfied with school for a variety of reasons and do not succeed in their studies. Schools can 'fail' young people in many ways and we noted that there is in many secondary schools wide dissatisfaction with the curricula not confined to early leavers. However, we wonder whether the many members of the group of young people we are considering here would find any school curriculum satisfactory. We were impressed by the evidence adduced from their studies by Professor W. F. Connell and his team that there is less dissatisfaction among young people in work than among those who stay on in school. At the same time the great majority of young Australians have a strong desire to acquire skills and knowledge that will be useful to them in later life. Our view is that, apart from a small number of initiatives by the Schools Commission directed mainly at encouraging young people to remain in conventional secondary schools, there is little evidence of a systematic policy with respect to early school leavers at either Federal or State levels. We do not necessarily advocate that any except the minority who are academically able but economically poor should be encouraged financially or otherwise to stay on in full-time school. We do wonder, however, whether the education authorities at Federal or State level should not accept a more positive social responsibility for these young people, helping them to achieve a satisfactory transition to adult social roles.

Finally, we gave some attention to the educational disadvantages of certain groups of girls. We have already referred to the difficulties many girls experience in rural areas and in towns dominated by heavy industry. In this section we consider the education of girls in general. In terms of retention rates in secondary schools the gap between boys and girls has narrowed very considerably in recent years. The proportion of boys and girls aged 17 in secondary schools is now drawing close - in 1974 it was 53% boys against 47% girls.

However, young women are still somewhat less likely to proceed to higher education. Just under 40% of undergraduates in universities and Colleges of Advanced Education are women. Furthermore, as in other countries, they are highly concentrated in faculties of arts and humanities, social sciences and education. In medical faculties the proportion of women is not much below the general average, but women are much more likely than men to be studying para-medical subjects such as occupational therapy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, speech therapy and so on. There are very few female apprentices, though the proportion is increasing. Conversely, the occupations of nursing and secretarial work which have much in common with trades and para-professional occupations for men are, as elsewhere, almost entirely staffed by women. Australia differs slightly from some other countries in that about a third of primary school teachers are males.

We arrived in Australia aware of the mythology that it is a male-dominated society. We left with the impression that this is still true in a variety of obvious ways. For example, of the 500 or so senior education and employment officials we spoke to, not more than 20 were women. The media still depict a society in which male and female roles are sharply distinguished and we have been informed that the text books still used in schools also stereotype sex roles. However, it must also be said that change is in the air and many of those in positions of authority in education offices are aware of a new social consciousness among women and the need to respond to it. We believe that efforts should be intensified to encourage young women to enter a wider range of occupations (and young men too) and that this can be achieved in part through their orientation towards tertiary studies.

One looming problem is that a contradiction appears to be developing between the desire to expand the occupational horizons of girls and the shortages foreseen in youth employment beyond the present recession. In effect, the opening to girls of apprenticeships and other jobs traditionally associated almost entirely with boys, if it occurs on a large enough scale, will set the two sexes in competition for scarce jobs. Unless the boys are induced simultaneously to enter jobs usually held by girls, a successful effort to widen girls' occupational choices may raise boys' unemployment rates. However, in country areas or areas of heavy industry where unemployment rates are unusually high among girls and parents are unwilling to let girls move to urban centres with more diversified labour markets, there may be no recourse other than to encourage girls to compete with boys for the scarce jobs. Obviously, economic conditions and policies which will increase the total demand for labour, including that for young people, may relieve some of the problems otherwise anticipated.

X

QUESTIONS TO THE AUSTRALIAN AUTHORITIES

The main purpose of our examination was to highlight issues not to solve problems. During our four week tour we found very much that was good with Australian education and met people at all levels of the administration in both Commonwealth and States who are becoming aware that society's responsibility for young people does not end the day they leave school. This is particularly true of early leavers. The questions in this chapter do not, therefore, imply criticism of either individuals or organisations. Sometimes, it is true, we do wish to draw attention to what appear to us to be possible defects in the present arrangements. Other questions, however, aim to draw attention to interesting developments in Australia or to promote discussion of issues which are of concern in several other OECD Member countries as well as in Australia.

As we said at the beginning of our report, we view the transition from school to work or further study not as an event but as a process and as an aspect of the wider issue of the relationships between school and society. In the questions below, Sections A and B are concerned with broad issues of educational and social policy insofar as they impinge on the transition issue.

In each section we pose one main question. This is usually followed by one or more subsidiary questions designed to highlight particular aspects of the issue.

SECTION A

The Social Role of Education

The system of administrative and financial relationships between the Commonwealth and the States, as they have evolved during the history of the Commonwealth and particularly since the end of the Second World War, is obviously a central factor in considering the issues raised by this review. As in any dynamic society these relationships are continuing to evolve especially through the impetus of discussions of the 'new Federalism'. Before it is possible to proceed to a discussion of the role that various Commonwealth and State agencies can play in helping to facilitate the transition from school to work or further study it is necessary to clarify how the Federal and State authorities view the broad social functions of education and their respective roles in performing them.

How do the Commonwealth and State authorities view the broad social purposes of education in Australia and how do each view their own roles and those of their partners in achieving them?

Subsidiary Questions

1. The expenditure of public funds on some non-government secondary schools seems to create an anomalous situation in that they pursue social and educational aims different from those which are expected of the various State systems. The latter must accept responsibility for meeting the full range of education in the community whereas a relatively small group of independent schools appear to be able to concentrate on an academic curriculum geared to university entrance. What do the Australian authorities consider to be the role of the non-government schools in the overall national provision of secondary education?

2. What are the main interest groups and organisations both inside and outside the education sector whose views the Commonwealth and State authorities feel obliged to take into account in any modification of the present arrangements for the provision of secondary and post-secondary education?

SECTION B

Relationships between Education Authorities and those Responsible for Employment

In this set of questions we are particularly concerned with the relationships between Education Departments at Federal and State levels and the Federal and State Departments or Ministries of Employment or Labour. We are also interested in the role of employers and trade unions. Obviously any coherent policies to facilitate the transition from education to work require collaboration between the two sectors, but, as in most countries, it appeared to the Examiners that such collaboration is at best embryonic and often non-existent.

What steps are being taken at both Commonwealth and State levels to bring about an adequate degree of co-ordination between educational and employment policies and between the respective agencies so as to ease the problems confronting young people as they make the transition from education to work?

Subsidiary Questions

1. Present levels of unemployment among young people are very much higher than Australia has become accustomed to during the past thirty years. To what extent is this seen as the most immediately important aspect of the problem of transition from school to work?

2. To what extent are labour market considerations taken into account in educational planning and policy-making and to what extent do both education and employment authorities believe that they ought to be?

3. What consideration is being given to the introduction of new, or the modification of existing, mechanisms at Commonwealth and State levels to improve the co-ordination of policies and to undertake joint activities with regard to policy formulation, background analysis, and research into the problems of transition from education to work?

4. What measures are being undertaken or are envisaged to co-ordinate the activities of the various statutory bodies at Commonwealth and State levels that have an involvement or an interest in the education, training, employment and organised leisure activities of young people between the ages of about 14 and 21?

5. Is there any long-term strategic assessment on either the education or the employment side of the desirable balance of student numbers and of funds, between increasing secondary school retention, TAFE, CAEs and universities?

6. How do the Federal employment authorities view the claim that the possibility of immigration of skilled manpower has resulted in a neglect of skill training by employers and an apathetic attitude towards manpower planning?

7. What information is available to the Australian authorities about the knowledge and understanding of employers regarding the education system and the skills and qualifications of young people when they leave it? What steps are being taken to ensure that employers make the maximum adaptation to the transitional needs and problems of school leavers?

8. To what extent is there trade union awareness of the problems involved in the transition of young people from school to work? What steps are being taken by the Australian authorities to ensure that trade unions respond positively to policy measures aimed at improving the transition process for young people?

SECTION C

The Content of Secondary and Technical and Further Education, the Assessment of Students and the Evaluation of Different Experiences in the Various States

Between them, the six States and the Commonwealth Government have accumulated a rich variety of experiences in providing and administering post-secondary, technical and further and tertiary education. At the same time, there appears to be widespread dissatisfaction with the nature of the curricula in both lower and upper secondary education, though the criticisms often contradict one another. There is considerable doubt about the value of present curricula for the intellectual development of individuals, for meeting the economic and social demand for qualified people, for reducing inequalities of educational opportunities or outcomes or for maintaining academic standards. In Australia as elsewhere there are clearly many divergent views about how best to design secondary education structures and curricula to meet these various objectives and to maintain the professional integrity and autonomy of teachers.

In this set of questions we wish to probe the current state of official thinking about the best ways in which secondary education institutions can meet these various objectives and the ways in which the various authorities can most usefully intervene to help initiate and guide curricular changes.

In the light of the many criticisms of the functions of secondary schools what changes in structure, curriculum and methods are desirable and practicable?

Subsidiary Questions

1. The Commonwealth Government and the six State Governments have a wide variety of different experiences in the provision of post-compulsory education. Has there been any co-ordinated evaluation of these experiences?

2. We noted a growing commitment within the education system towards structures and curricula that cater for students of a

wider range of abilities and interests than in the past, although practical approaches differ from State to State. What is the attitude of the education authorities to the claim that, if students are permitted to pursue different interests at too early an age, this will result in unequal chances of academic achievement and hence unequal long-term opportunities?

3. What consideration is being given to ways and means of improving relationships between secondary high schools and the technical and further education sector?

4. How do the Australian authorities react to the claim that the dominance of academic curricula, especially in fifth and sixth forms, and the reluctance of many education authorities to widen the range of subjects acceptable for tertiary entry, result in a limitation of educational opportunities for some categories of students and impede legitimate claims for recognition of non-traditional and many technical subjects?

5. In particular, how do the Federal and State education authorities view the claims of some ethnic minority groups that their languages and culture are often insufficiently recognised in secondary school curricula?

SECTION D

Careers Education and Transition Services

Although the provision of counselling and guidance services can do little in isolation to overcome a fundamental imbalance between the education system and the rest of the economy and society, it can do much to ease the passage of young people from one kind of activity to another. In this section we are concerned with the information, advisory, and job placement services available to young people at this critical stage in their lives.

What measures are envisaged to increase the number and improve the efficiency of personnel in the various agencies concerned with careers education, educational and occupational information and guidance, job placement and follow-up and what steps are being taken to bring about effective co-ordination between the various activities?

Subsidiary Questions

1. To what extent is recurrent education seen as a potential solution to some of the problems of transition from school to other activities

and how usual is it for students in secondary schools to be advised to take advantage of the flexible options that are readily available?

2. What do the Australian authorities understand to be the extent of parent influence over the career choices of young people and the success of their transition from school to work? What policies have been adopted or are envisaged which will facilitate the performance by parents in this role?

SECTION E

The Structure of Post-Compulsory Education

Entry rates to tertiary education are not high in Australia compared with those of some other countries with similar levels of economic and social development, and present retention rates in the upper forms of secondary education seem to indicate that a levelling off in the long-term trend of growth may be under way. Nevertheless, the spectre of possible graduate unemployment received considerable public comment during our visit and there were many suggestions that further restraint should be imposed on expenditure on higher education by the Federal authorities. In our discussions with administrators at both State and Federal levels emphasis was put on the need for structural changes so as to adapt the whole post-secondary sector more closely to the prospective needs of society and the demands of individual students. An important aspect of structural reform in the context of our review was the relationship between tertiary institutions (universities and Colleges of Advanced Education) and the TAFE sector (Colleges of Technical and Further Education). We have indicated the special importance we attach to the potentialities of TAFE and the need for it to play a larger part in the development of post-secondary education as a whole. There is a widely held view that TAFE institutions offer particularly good opportunities for overcoming some of the transition problems with which we were concerned both through their role in specialised vocational education and their activities in recurrent and adult education. We recognise, however, that no single category of institution necessarily has a monopoly of either type of provision.

Do the Commonwealth and State authorities see the need for some rationalisation in the provision of post-secondary education in Australia as a whole and in individual States?

Subsidiary Questions

1. Are many measures envisaged by either the Commonwealth or State authorities that would increase the amount of funds available for technical and further education?

2. Would the Commonwealth authorities envisage some modification of the functions of certain Colleges of Advanced Education and possibly certain universities with a view to bringing them effectively into partnership with the TAFE sector in the provision of Community Colleges?

3. Did the creation of the Colleges of Advanced Education with their concentration on tertiary level work and their reliance on Federal funding affect the TAFE institutions to such an extent that education and training opportunities for secondary school leavers not entering tertiary institutions were significantly reduced?

4. What steps are being taken or are envisaged to build up the links between TAFE colleges and other institutions providing secondary and tertiary education so as to provide genuine and effective alternative routes into tertiary education?

5. What policies, if any, are envisaged to help promote recurrent education as an alternative to the continued expansion of traditional secondary and tertiary education?

SECTION F

Early Leavers

We consider that the group of young people most neglected by present policies are those who leave school at or around the minimum school-leaving age and who undertake no further formal study. We have, throughout our report, made clear our belief that as well as individual families, society as a whole, and in particular the public authorities concerned with education and employment as well as trade unions and employers have responsibilities for the well-being of all young people and not merely those who are successful at school or in formally organised training schemes.

What do the Commonwealth and State authorities responsible for both education and employment matters see as their main responsibilities to young people who leave school at or around the minimum school-leaving age and who do not undertake apprenticeships or any other formally organised training schemes?

SECTION G

Disadvantaged and Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

In addition to early leavers, certain groups of young people may require special help with respect to continuing their secondary education and the job opportunities available to them. We examined in particular the opportunities available and the use made of them by Aborigines, recent immigrants, handicapped people, young people from isolated areas and girls. We recognise that great efforts have been made in recent years on behalf of all these groups but there is a number of matters which merit discussion in an OECD forum.

To what extent do the Australian authorities believe that the secondary education system can and should pursue the separate aims of trying to integrate young people from Aboriginal and ethnic minority backgrounds into the mainstream of Australian life and at the same time to preserve their cultural identities?

Subsidiary Questions

1. Young people from small, geographically isolated areas suffer several disadvantages with respect both to post-secondary educational options and employment opportunities. What measures are envisaged to enhance the life chances of such young people?

2. How effective have been recent efforts to raise the expectations and self-image of girl students so as to enable them to enter a wider range of tertiary education courses and occupations?

SECTION H

Statistical Information

It is inevitable that an enquiry of this nature will reveal some lack of desirable statistical information. We identified a number of extremely valuable research studies and were able to discuss them with their authors. However, little relevant information is available on a continuing basis. We noted several areas of weakness - a certain lack of comparability between States in all but the broadest statistics, substantial delay in the availability of statistics at Commonwealth level and a lack of any kind of flow data that would allow an examination of the educational and training and employment experiences of each generation of young people as they pass through the education system and into work. We also noted the inadequacy of employment data for youth.

What steps are being undertaken to improve the quantity and quality of statistical information available, particularly at the Commonwealth level, so as to permit a more thorough analysis of the whole process of transition between the various branches of education and from all branches of education into employment?

Subsidiary Question

1. What machinery exists, or is envisaged, to undertake systematic research into the problems of transition and evaluation on a continuing basis of the various experiences gained?

Part Two

RECORD OF THE REVIEW MEETING

Paris, 9 December 1976

I. OPENING STATEMENT BY MR. KENNETH JONES FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION

The meeting began with an introductory statement from the leader of the Australian delegation, Mr. K. N. Jones, in which, as the representative of a relatively new OECD Member country, he stressed the value of the OECD connection and the importance attached by those working in education to their association with and involvement in the work of the Education Committee and CERI.

He went on to provide the Committee with some background information about the subject for the review. The choice was settled in late 1974 at a meeting of the Australian Education Council and was made at a time when the Commonwealth Government had rapidly increased its financial support for education in the States at all levels, there had been a sharp rise in the share of national resources devoted to education and there was vocal public interest in the provision of educational services.

As late as 1974 there had not been any widespread public concern about the sector by sector approach to education by the Commonwealth Government or about the basic standards attained by school leavers. Nor had there been any tempering of the demand to allocate more resources to education. These tendencies had emerged since.

In selecting as the theme of the review the Transition from School to Work or Further Study the Australian education authorities had been conscious not only of their own shortcomings in this area but of the increasing attention that their OECD partners were paying to this subject. They had asked that the examination be focussed principally on the large majority of school leavers who proceeded directly to work either at or soon after the time when they became free to leave school or during the later stages of the secondary cycle. They had assumed that the Examiners would find it necessary to take a particularly close look at the nature and content of secondary schooling; the adequacy of guidance and counselling services; job opportunities for young people and the capacity of the labour market to meet the needs of individual workers; access to post-secondary education for school leavers with varying levels of ability and educational experience; the provision of particular programmes and learning opportunities for especially disadvantaged groups.

When the review theme had been chosen there had been little public concern about unemployment among school leavers and no explicit reference had been made to labour market agencies. Since then the relevance of the labour market connection to current policy debates had been accentuated by the emergence of severe unemployment among young people, rising national concern about the educational standards attained by school leavers, and a substantial slowing down in the rate of increase of education resources.

Since the Examiners' departure from Australia the Commonwealth Government had appointed a committee to conduct a national review of education and training with particular reference to the educational needs and preferences of individuals, the community and the economy and to the relationship between education and the labour market. This promised to be the most significant of many enquiries into aspects of Australian education undertaken during the past decade. The committee was expected to report during 1978.

Mr. Jones concluded his introductory remarks with a resumé of several other important developments since the Examiners' visit which were germane to the Examiners' questions and recommendations.

1. The Commonwealth authorities had received the report of a national working party representing the employment and education sectors and set up with the approval of Labour and Education Ministers from both States and Commonwealth. This working party had arrived at conclusions about guidance and career services in line with those of the OECD Examiners.
2. The Curriculum Development Centre had been established as a statutory body to co-ordinate national initiatives in this area.
3. Enquiries into the administration and finance of post-secondary institutions had been completed in two States and started in three others.
4. Despite overall restraints on public expenditure, education and manpower training programmes had continued to receive preferential treatment.

II. OPENING STATEMENT BY DR. SVEN MOBERG FOR THE EXAMINERS

For the Examiners Dr. Moberg expressed appreciation of the willing co-operation received from the hundreds of witnesses who had been interviewed and the near perfect practical arrangements and preparatory work by national and State agencies as well as OECD staff for what had been a very strenuous tour of a very large country.

Commenting on the prescience of the Australian authorities in selecting this topic over two years ago, he remarked upon the growing interest of all OECD countries in educational and training provision for the 16-19 age group and the problems of transition from school to other activities. This transition was central to the whole question of the relationship between education and working life and to the well-being and stability of the younger generation in contemporary societies. Everywhere there was a desire to develop a coherent strategy for the 16-19 age group.

The increasing difficulty experienced by school leavers in finding jobs could not, he thought, be attributed entirely to the current worldwide economic recession. There were disquieting structural features of the youth labour market in many countries that gave cause for concern. One feature was the attitude of young people themselves towards work and working conditions. They questioned the values of their elders, they were disturbed about their future careers and many of them were deterred by working conditions as they perceived them.

III. THE DISCUSSION

The Social Role of Education

The Examiners' first major topic was introduced by Dr. Roeloffs. Coming from a Federal republic he expressed special interest in the way the Federal and State education authorities interacted with each other to promote and improve the education of the Australian people. He was particularly impressed with what could almost be considered an Australian invention - the creation by the Commonwealth Government of quasi-independent statutory commissions which offer advice on Commonwealth supported programmes and through which Federal funds were channelled.

Nevertheless, the Examiners felt that within such a system there was a built-in risk of divergent views on priorities or direction of development, and consequently of conflict or the need for compromise at the expense of innovation. Such a risk might become more apparent in a situation where two developments coincided: a general scarcity of public funds at Federal and State levels; and a growing awareness of the role of education in overall social development, i. e. in the realisation of national policy as a whole.

In the Australian context this meant that the political mechanism for financing education was looked at by the Examiners in their first set of questions against the background of, on the one hand, what the Examiners had come to feel as a rather new sense of nationhood and Australian national unity, and, on the other hand, of the principles of a 'new Federalism' in national policy - i.e. the movement towards developing approaches to national policy and planning through greater emphasis on the intermediaries of the various State governments rather than Central Government departments.

In that connection, he also wondered about the importance that a strong private school system and the considerable public subsidies accorded to it were seen to have by the policy-makers. Was it seen as an advantage, educationally and politically, in providing an element of inter-State coherence and a field for uncontroversial federal-State co-operation in financing, or was it seen to make more difficult the pursuit of reform objectives in the public, especially the secondary public, cycle?

In his reply, Mr. Jones referred to the interaction between Australian society and its education systems. Australians had rising levels of expectation and a tradition of reliance on the State to provide a wide range of social services including education at all levels. Education was conceived as promoting the total development of young people rather than concentrating narrowly on either intellectual or vocational training. To satisfy the particular requirements of the labour market was not seen as a primary aim of education. Developing the person implied the acquisition of basic skills and the habit of learning. It also implied fostering the capacity for self-determination so that every young person could be equipped to make an independent judgement about what he or she read, heard or perceived. There was increasing acceptance of the need for positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged groups. As educational levels of attainment rose, young people became more critical of established customs and institutions. As the realisation of Australia as a pluralist society deepened, so tolerance of dissenters increased.

Mr. Jones acknowledged a growing divergence of view among people about the social role of education and to a certain degree welcomed it as an indication of increasing public interest and concern.

The respective roles of the State and Commonwealth authorities were the outcome of complex pressures but essentially the connection was based on partnership. In essence the Commonwealth role complemented that of the States. This role involved sharing with the State administrators responsibility for developing national attitudes and approaches and ensuring balanced growth throughout the community. The methods used were stimulation, initiation, consultation, co-operation and the judicious application of the powers of financial persuasion. The Commonwealth education authorities had direct responsibilities for the support of students and for specific target groups such as migrants and Aboriginals. There were also comprehensive special assistance programmes to the States.

The education authorities in the separate States had primary responsibility for the management of their systems and for policy development.

There was an increasing belief among both State and Commonwealth officials in the desirability of greater community involvement in educational decision-making and of the active participation of teachers, parents and students.

In conclusion, Mr. Jones emphasized that Commonwealth initiatives in education must be undertaken through the States and for the most part by means of financial mechanisms.

Dr. Mossenson pointed out that there were important differences between the States both in their educational objectives and in the ways in which they sought to achieve them. He also drew attention to the complex pattern of inter-State relationships which had existed for a long time and which the new Federalism was strengthening. He emphasized that the States had always been responsible for the provision of sub-tertiary education. This was still the situation today notwithstanding the significant changes which had occurred in public funding following the advent of the Schools Commission.

He thought it appropriate to correct an impression conveyed in the Examiners' report that concern with Aboriginal education was only recent and confined to the Commonwealth Government. His own State had been making special provision for the needs of its Aboriginal population for over 40 years. Other States had also been making special provision for a long time.

Mr. Jones explained the nature of Federal financial support for education and the principles underlying it. Commonwealth intervention had begun with support for research in universities and gradually spread until it had encompassed virtually the whole of the financing of higher education. Subsequently, funds had been made available to supplement State financing of secondary education. More recently, supplementary aid had been given to Technical and Further Education (TAFE). The mechanism for providing finance was the Statutory Advisory Commission set up as a buffer and as an expert body to promote balanced development and to lessen the possibility of direct Commonwealth political intervention in education. Subsidies had been provided to private schools on the basis of a carefully worked out formula of relative financial need and there were no grounds for the implication that wealthy schools were the major recipients of public funds. The main beneficiaries were schools in the parochial Catholic system and there was no reason to suppose that their educational objectives differed markedly from those of the State systems. In reply to a question from the Canadian delegation he pointed out that accountability for the use of public funds by private schools was almost entirely limited to financial criteria.

Professor Williams inquired whether there was not too much centralisation of educational control in the States in view of the huge geographical areas of most of them. Did this not cause problems? Dr. Mossenson agreed that there were problems, but pointed out, first, that in all States there was very considerable concentration of population around the State capitals and that, secondly, centralised control was the best guarantee of a reasonable degree of equality of opportunity for young people in more remote areas. There was a weak tradition of local government and local community initiatives in Australia. However, community participation in education was becoming the subject of public debate and more States were experimenting with varying degrees of decentralisation while maintaining at the centre adequate financial accountability for the use of public funds.

The opening remarks of the Australian representative gave rise to a lively discussion. Delegates from France, Canada and New Zealand in particular expressed interest in various aspects of the public subsidy to private schools. Delegates from Yugoslavia, Germany and Canada showed particular interest in the financial and administrative relationships between the Federal and State authorities. The German delegation commented on what seemed the remarkable self-denial of the Commonwealth authorities in being willing to make funds available with few strings attached. Dr. Mossenson replied by referring to the close co-operation between the States and the statutory commissions. Certainly there were differences of opinion but as a rule these were settled by negotiation. Mr. Jones pointed out that education was a highly political matter in Australia and there were frequent controversies. There were, however, numerous contacts between Federal and State education authorities, and the major organisations of parents and teachers and also of tertiary staff and students.

The United States delegate remarked upon the absence of local citizen participation in school affairs and the United Kingdom delegate commented that there was pressure for some form of "industrial democracy" in schools in his country. Mr. Jones agreed that similar pressures were on the increase in Australia.

Education and Employment

Opening the discussion on the second group of questions, Professor Williams said that the issues covered went right to the heart of the Review. He drew attention to the personal unhappiness and frustration as well as the social waste that could result if educational policies were not sufficiently related to the needs of working life, or if employers had unrealistic expectations of the abilities and attainments of young people leaving the education system at different levels and with varying types of qualifications.

As the employment prospects for young people worsened, it was particularly important that there should be co-operation between education authorities and the public bodies responsible for employment policies. The Examiners believed that there was scope for much closer co-operation between the two sets of authorities at both Federal and State levels.

Responding, Mr. Limbrick reminded the meeting that a large group of questions was covered under this heading and suggested that they be taken in five stages: 1) questions directly related to the relations between education and employment authorities; 2) questions dealing with more general issues of policy in the two areas; 3) questions concerned with present levels of unemployment among young people; 4) questions on immigration; 5) questions relating to the attitudes of employers and trade unions.

Mr. Limbrick said that there was a preliminary point which should be understood, namely, that the Commonwealth Government had a primary role with respect to employment matters and that the involvement of State governments was relatively small, being limited largely to concern with the administration of apprentice training through the technical education sector. There was thus a considerable difference here compared with that which obtained in the educational sphere.

Mr. Limbrick went on to declare that neither the education nor the employment authorities in Australia had any difficulty in accepting the proposition that inter-sectoral collaboration on policies relevant to the transition from education to work had been in the past "embryonic at best". At the same time, he wished to qualify the proposition of the Examiners. Stimulated in part by the Examiners' strictures, considerable discussion was now taking place between the two sets of interests, one small illustration of which was his own presence as an official of the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Industrial Relations on the Australian delegation for this Education Committee Review. Secondly, he pointed out that whereas at the level of 'high policy' there had been in the past little co-operation, at the operational level - where policies were often determined by the urgent need 'to do something' - collaboration had always been much closer. He instanced the long history of collaboration between Education Departments and individual schools, on the one hand, and the regional and local offices of the Commonwealth Employment Service, on the other, over such matters as the provision of career literature, vocational guidance, organisation of discussions and seminars for parents and children leaving school and so on. Furthermore, although there was no national co-ordinating machinery, many practical links existed between education and employment authorities, for example, the Australian Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, the National Training Council and perhaps above all the Technical and Further Education Commission, which was the statutory commission responsible for channelling Federal finance into Technical and Further Education.

Growing awareness of the need for more collaboration was exemplified by the recommendation of the national Working Party on the Transition from School to Work that there should be a permanent National Council with a range of responsibilities towards young people making this important transition.

Turning to the question of current youth unemployment, Mr. Limbrick said that further analysis of the available statistics had caused the Commonwealth Department of Employment to revise some of the views they had expressed to the Examiners on the occasion of their visit. The Department no longer felt that there was any convincing evidence of a long run trend since the mid-1960s for youth unemployment to rise independently of the general state of the economy. Recent analyses had shown that the ratio of teenage unemployment to total unemployment in Australia had not varied significantly in the post-war period till after 1972 when a small but perceptible deterioration of the job situation for young people had occurred. However, an upward trend in the relative unemployment of teenagers had become marked since the last few months of 1975. Mr. Limbrick remarked that this new interpretation of the Australian data seemed to follow the pattern revealed in a number of other countries as shown in Dr. Reubens' study published by the United States National Council for Manpower in its report From School to Work.

In Mr. Limbrick's view it was no coincidence that youth unemployment had emerged as a grave problem during a period of economic uncertainty. Recruitment of young workers by employers represented a considerable investment in overhead costs by way of induction, training and so on. These costs were often higher than those incurred in recruiting more experienced workers. It was understandable that during times of economic uncertainty employers did not want to incur the overhead costs entailed in offering specific training to young workers.

However, he heartily endorsed the comments of the Examiners that there was a need for more effective arrangements for education and training in the light of the job opportunities that were likely to become available when economic growth resumed. The problem was, of course, how to predict in advance what these job opportunities would be. This problem was underlined by the German delegate who also believed that there were difficulties in persuading many young people to take up the training opportunities available to them. The Norwegian delegate expressed the firm conviction that youth unemployment was not a result of a mismatch between the skills of young people and those required by employers but rather a result of general unemployment. He put forward the proposal that a government subsidy for community work undertaken by young people at times of high unemployment could reduce the cost of unemployment benefits and provide socially useful activities while simultaneously preventing young people from despairing when they were unable to find employment at the start of their working lives. Mr. Limbrick agreed with this proposal but felt that there were technical problems in the way of ensuring that such a subsidy would not in practice go to young people who would have found work in any case. The Swedish delegate noted that there were employment subsidy schemes in his country that avoided these difficulties and managed to combine job creation for young people with a measure of vocational training.

Several participants asked about job creation schemes for young people in Australia and the Australian delegation mentioned a number of schemes that had been tried with varying degrees of success. At present the schemes in active use were not 'pure' job creation schemes, but were training schemes with subsidiary elements of job creation in them. Current measures were the National Employment and Training System (NEAT) and the National Apprenticeship Assistance Scheme (NAAS). An extensive locally oriented job creation programme known as REDS (Regional Employment Development Scheme) had been abandoned recently because of budgetary and other difficulties. While other types of programmes were under consideration, e. g. , marginal wage subsidy arrangements, incremental job creation schemes, etc. , more were likely to be adopted in the near future. In general, the Australian Government was not in favour of public employment programmes of the kind adopted in the USA in which the government became the "employer of last resort".

In responding to the general discussion and the Examiners' first subsidiary question, Mr. Limbrick considered it doubtful whether the education or employment authorities regarded present levels of unemployment among young people as being the most immediately important aspect of the problem of transition from school to work. It should not be forgotten that even with present high levels of cyclical unemployment, over 85% of young job seekers found employment without too much difficulty. The main issue was whether school leavers could find jobs that yielded satisfaction and scope for career development. He suggested that a really important question requiring investigation was whether unemployment merely delayed the transition of young people from education to working life or whether it had the effect of making the transition more difficult. There was some evidence that prolonged unemployment at the start of a young person's working life adversely affected his ability to obtain and retain stable employment.

In reply to the third group of questions in this section Mr. Limbrick thought it convenient to treat together the topics of the relevance of curricula to employment needs and manpower planning. Except in very general terms labour market considerations were not accorded any substantial weight in educational planning and policy-making - certainly not at the secondary level. Both education and employment authorities favoured the principle that it was not the function of secondary education to prepare young people for specific employment, although some career orientation was increasingly considered desirable.

There was no great experience of comprehensive manpower forecasting in Australia, though projections had been made for particular categories such as teachers, doctors, dentists and veterinary surgeons. The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations was at present participating with other government departments in a major exercise known as IMPACT of which the object was to provide better information about future demands for labour and the occupational and industrial patterns involved. IMPACT represented an essentially medium-term economic model of the Australian economy designed to study problems of structural change.

Turning to the question of the role of immigration in delaying the development of a coherent manpower policy, Mr. Limbrick agreed that the ready availability of skilled immigrant labour may well have caused a good number of employers to neglect training for their own future needs. However, he suggested that in the favourable situation in which Australia had found herself during the past few decades it had not been an unreasonable manpower policy to use controlled immigration of different categories of skilled manpower as a means of balancing demand and supply. On the other hand, it could be argued that since the scaling down of the immigration programme in the early 1970s a new situation had arisen to which employers, the education system and the employment authorities had not yet fully adjusted. The reduced rate of labour force growth now being experienced inevitably necessitated greater emphasis on maximising the potential of the resident population. In this respect there were some obvious weaknesses. The output of skilled tradesmen in some key occupational categories by the apprenticeship system had not kept pace with the demands of employers. At the same time, employers as a whole were reluctant to provide sufficient training facilities for apprentices notwithstanding the relatively generous subsidies available. The problem of encouraging a sufficient volume of trade training was under active consideration in Australia at present, and in this context the problem of small employers were being given special weight.

The final group of questions in this section concerned the attitudes of employers and trade unions. The Australian delegation considered that neither employers nor trade unions had performed a very active role in relation to youth unemployment and its problems although in recent months both had expressed concern about it. Employers did not expect the education system to provide specific skills and the trade union movement in general endorsed this view. However, both employers and trade unions believed that labour market considerations were vital factors to be taken into account when formulating and implementing educational policy. Some trade unions had in fact advocated the training of apprentices full time in technical institutions, but the industrial and educational implications of this approach had not been thought through by its proponents.

Curriculum and Examinations

Discussion of this topic was introduced by Dr. Roeloffs. He pointed out that during their visit the Examiners had become aware of a very lively debate in Australia about the role and effectiveness of evaluation and assessment procedures in secondary schools and the intellectual content and effectiveness of the curriculum. Much of this was independent of the role of secondary schools in preparing young people for the transition to working life but representatives of employers had expressed concern about the lack of preparedness of many school leavers particularly in basic subjects such as mathematics and English language. At the same time, there were the somewhat contradictory claims that the curriculum was excessively dominated by academic considerations, particularly the still severe competition for entry to favoured university departments such as medical faculties in those State universities which had them. Dr. Roeloffs also drew attention to complaints that formal educational qualifications were becoming increasingly necessary for entry into many occupations.

Dr. Mossenson replied that it was necessary to question the statement of the Examiners that "there appears to be widespread dissatisfaction with the nature of the curricula in both upper and lower secondary education". Until quite recently much of the criticism of the curricula had been made by the teaching profession especially over the cramping effect of external examinations. Within the last decade as students had acquired greater opportunities to express their point of view, there had been some questioning of the relevance of school subjects to real life. Usually this questioning had been confined to considerations of where the responsibility lay for handling social issues and sex and health education. It should be recognised that the so-called failure of schools to equip young people with employable skills was a recent focus of criticism, coinciding almost exactly with the economic downturn and rising unemployment rates among young people.

He was very suspicious of claims that curricular innovation had led to declining standards in the basic subjects. With few exceptions all secondary schools offered obligatory courses in English and mathematics in each of the years of lower secondary school. In addition, general science and social studies subjects were usually required subjects. Various approaches had been used to overcome differences in the level of pupil performance. Beyond the core of compulsory subjects schools offered elective subjects whose range and variety differed between schools and between States.

Curriculum development had recently received much attention, particularly at the State level, and all the State systems possessed well-established curriculum units. At a conservative estimate, no fewer than 300 officers were occupied full time as curriculum specialists. At the national level a Curriculum Development Centre had recently been established.

There was undoubtedly growing recognition in Australia of the need for more vocationally oriented programmes in secondary schools. The current crisis in youth unemployment, combined with the effect of the Examiners' Report, would lead to the education authorities paying closer attention to preparation for employment. However, the Examiners' specific suggestion that career orientation should be an obligatory subject was hardly likely to prove popular. Experience had shown that subjects receiving small time allocations per week rarely achieved worthwhile results. Rather than a new subject making its appearance, therefore, it was more likely that pre-vocational material would be incorporated in social studies or other programmes and that counselling sources would be upgraded and the provision for industrial visits and work experience extended. The State systems endeavoured to associate in-service education with curriculum development. The expansion of in-service education provision which had resulted from the flow of funds from the Schools Commission should enable this provision to extend to the vocational field.

Given the prevailing economic climate, the relevance and quality of secondary school courses would be more closely related to the question of employment prospects for young people. While every effort must be made to enhance the school's contribution, problems inherent in the condition of the economy could not be ignored. The Norwegian delegate was right to say that the availability - or, more seriously, the non-availability - of jobs was a problem manifestly beyond the schools' capacity to resolve.

On the question of exchanging inter-State experiences, Dr. Mossenson said that no formal co-ordination had occurred among the States and the Commonwealth with regard to secondary education beyond the post-compulsory years. On the other hand, opportunities for inter-State contacts had rapidly increased during the recent past. For example, high school principals and superintendents in Western Australia, who had been concerned to provide vocational programmes for students not completing the two years of upper secondary education, had acquired valuable information from investigations of terminal fourth year courses in other States.

In their report the Examiners had highlighted the importance of evaluation in the various fields of educational activity. It was to be expected that in the future co-ordinated evaluation would take place along the lines suggested by the Examiners. First, however, Australian educationists would have to acquire greater expertise in evaluation techniques.

On the dangers of early specialisation referred to by the Examiners, Dr. Mossenson stated that there was widespread support among education authorities for ongoing study in the core subject areas throughout the first three or four years of secondary schooling. Premature specialisation would result not only in reduced opportunities for subsequent academic achievement but would probably lessen immediate job prospects. Education authorities rejected the view that sharp differences existed between vocational and general educational aims in lower and middle secondary education. The capacity to communicate together with a reasonable level of literacy and numeracy were important elements in the preparation for employment and, at the same time, were fully consistent with the general aims of education.

Dr. Mossenson agreed with the Examiners that in the past the interface between secondary and technical education had not received the attention it warranted, at least outside Victoria. There were, however, encouraging signs that the situation was rapidly being improved. Most technical institutions offered bridging courses of different types and 'link' or shared programmes, in which the use of secondary and technical facilities were combined, were under consideration. In Tasmania, the incorporation of a wide range of practical and technical subjects promised to transform that State's matriculation (upper secondary) colleges into broadly based institutions catering for the needs of different categories of upper secondary students and adults.

The charge that the curriculum in upper secondary education was too academic had some force, although considerable changes had occurred in recent years. More varied and less academic courses were being developed in New South Wales and elsewhere, many of them as outcomes of school-based curriculum development projects. Many of the tertiary institutions, particularly the Colleges of Advanced Education, had shown a willingness to accept newer subjects for admission purposes. Several universities, as well as the Colleges, had modified their admission procedures in order to admit larger numbers of mature age students. In a number of States adults seeking matriculation qualifications were being admitted to secondary schools. All in all, current trends led to the conclusion that recognition of non-traditional qualifications for the purposes of admission to post-secondary institutions would not constitute a problem in the future.

Dr. Mossenson could not accept the contention that the language and culture of ethnic minority groups were insufficiently recognised in the school curriculum. Examination authorities throughout the States offered a wide range of languages at the upper secondary level. At the lower secondary level, genuine attempts were made to represent the cultures of major ethnic groups. For example, the Australia-wide Social Education Materials Project, which had been developed over the past two to three years, comprised eight main themes, four of which - 'Racial and Ethnic Relations'; 'Family Groupings'; 'Community Study'; and 'Changing Social Relationships' - drew heavily upon the cultural background of immigrant and indigenous groups within the population.

Mr. Jones referred to the National Curriculum Development Centre which, since 1975, had been developing a national programme of research in the secondary school curriculum. He mentioned also the work of the Education Research and Development Committee in stimulating research into educational issues and in training research workers. Previously, much educational research had to be imported into Australia and there was still a shortage of well qualified research workers.

The Australian delegation felt that claims that the languages and cultures of ethnic minority groups were in general neglected in secondary schools needed to be seen in perspective. Not all schools could cater for the needs of all their ethnic minorities. It was certainly true that young people from immigrant families were more likely to be unemployed but this was often due to their lack of command of the English language rather than any specific discrimination against their national culture.

Early Leavers

The discussion was opened by Dr. Reubens who pointed out that early during the Examiners' visit the Australian authorities had made it clear that this was one of the main issues in the minds of the Australian authorities when selecting the subject for review and that the Examiners had little difficulty in accepting it as a high priority. In the past ten years, and particularly in the past five, there had been a very rapid expansion of post-secondary educational opportunity for the most able 20-30% of the population. However, it remained the case that between one half and two thirds of young Australians entered the labour force at the earliest opportunity, most of whom reveived no subsequent training. The Examiners had deliberately framed their question broadly in order to stimulate discussion of the important issues of principle involved.

In his reply Mr. Jones agreed about the importance the Federal and State authorities attached to this topic and about the need for greater attention to the problems of early school leavers by the education and employment authorities. However, the question put by the Examiners was almost too hard to answer. He invited Mr. Limbrick nonetheless to make the effort.

Mr. Limbrick conceded that until recently young school leavers had not been seen as a group for whom the public authorities had any particular responsibility. In broad terms the Australian employment authorities had not perceived their obligation towards this group of young people as being different from that in relation to other groups in the community seeking employment assistance. In other words, there was a commitment to provide a full range of labour market services, i.e. vocational counselling, placement, vocational training through the NEAT system and so on. By posing this question the Examiners had helped the authorities to see that there were special problems for significant numbers of young people in making the transition from education into the workforce.

It was recognised that school leavers were not a uniform group and that the circumstances causing them to leave the education system varied considerably. These circumstances ranged from a lack of intellectual ability to active dissatisfaction with the education system and various economic and parental influences. Obviously these varying circumstances implied different policy and programme responses.

If it could be assumed that the individual had the capacity for further development either through formal education or vocational training, the problem was how to facilitate his access to relevant programmes and to create or restore motivation. There were no restrictions which prevented any individual from seeking employment assistance through the Commonwealth Employment Service; the only restriction on eligibility for labour market training under the NEAT system was that the training must be of a kind which enhanced the employability of the individual and could be expected to lead towards stable employment. To the extent that this training took place in formal institutions, access was largely determined by the admission rules of the institutions concerned.

Where the individual had left school through lack of ability to accept further education or dissatisfaction with the education system per se it seemed that a more innovative approach to the provision of vocational training might be required.

A recent response to the problems of school leavers having difficulty in obtaining suitable employment had been the introduction of a special programme under the NEAT System - The Special Youth Employment and Training Programme (SYETP). This scheme was directed towards persons aged fifteen to nineteen years who had left school and been unable to obtain suitable employment with their existing qualifications. The programme provided for a special rate of subsidy to employers willing to provide six months on-the-job training. No restrictions were imposed, apart from the labour market considerations already referred to, on the occupation or industry in which the training might take place.

Notwithstanding this recent initiative there was scope for vocationally oriented courses, possibly involving work experience programmes, better designed to meet the employment needs of this group. Remedial courses designed to overcome deficiencies with respect to literacy, numeracy, and communication skills were also required. It also seemed clear that guidance and counselling resources should be directed towards the particular problems of this category of school leavers. Responding to a question from the German delegate, the Australian delegation indicated that neither the education nor the employment authorities saw any virtue in raising the school-leaving age beyond its present levels in an effort to overcome the transitional and unemployment problems of early school leavers.

Supplementing Mr. Limbrick's remarks, Dr. Mossenson said that a real strength of the Examiners' Report was its repeated emphasis upon the special problems of the early school leaver. Having experienced failure rather than success in the classroom, numbers of youngsters left school at or around the minimum compulsory age hoping to obtain unskilled work. These youngsters were not competitive in the labour market and their prospects diminished as general education standards rose and employers demanded higher qualifications. Education authorities had hitherto devised little by way of programmes to benefit them, although they constituted an appreciable proportion of their age group. Many of them suffered from the additional disability of being outside the more recognisable and organised disadvantaged groups which, in recent years, had achieved some gains for themselves through political and other forms of pressure.

Within the schools job orientation for early school leavers was likely to receive more attention in the future, with counselling and other services directed at their particular needs. It was important to tackle such practical aspects of obtaining employment as how to respond to an advertisement and to behave at an interview. Job oriented courses were likely to be featured more prominently in the elective sectors of the middle secondary school programme. It was equally important to remedy some of the deficiencies and to extend the ramifications of work experience. The point made by the Examiners that community colleges should not restrict their offerings to the well motivated and already employed was also relevant.

In reply to a question from the French delegate about the role of apprenticeship in occupational education Mr. Limbrick conceded that the apprenticeship system was perhaps called upon to do too much in Australia. As well as preparing young people for craft occupations it was often also the avenue to professional training, especially in engineering. Aside from the question of sheer numbers, the Australian apprenticeship training system was, on the whole, much less flexible an instrument than was desirable. Training periods, especially in the light of modern teaching methods, tended to be too long, and many of its practices and provisions had become the subject of industrial bargaining rather than educational or training policy.

The United States delegate wondered whether any thought had been given to the idea of "educational drawing rights" as a way of providing school leavers with guaranteed opportunities for further education later on in their lives. Mr. Jones replied that this idea was not under active consideration in Australia. Instead emphasis was placed on providing more open access to institutions of higher education for potential students of all ages.

The Canadian delegate said that his country also had to deal with the problem of early school leavers. However, inquiries had shown that only a small number of students dropped out because the education system was failing them. Reasons for dropping out were very diverse. One solution which showed some promise was the provision of alternative social settings for the provision of secondary education without any sacrifice of essential educational standards.

At this, Dr. Mossenson commented that there had been several individual experiments with alternative types of schools in Australia but that interest in them appeared to be waning.

The Italian delegate reminded the Committee of the suggestion by the Examiners that society should assume some general responsibilities for the development of young people that were not necessarily specifically education. Dr. Reubens emphasized the importance of finding solutions to the early leaving problem as a joint education-employment activity. Mr. Limbrick wished to know what kinds of measures governments must take if they were to accept a general responsibility involving "loose pastoral care" for the social welfare and development of early school leavers. Dr. Roeloffs said the goal might be to enable all young people to acquire a full, marketable qualification by the time they were eighteen. Mr. Jones concluded this part of the discussion by saying that in Australia people had barely started thinking about such issues.

Careers Education and Transition Services

Dr. Reubens introduced the topic by informing the delegates that the Examiners had been impressed with much of what was being done in the area of providing young people in school with information, advice, guidance and job placement. There was virtually no type of scheme that was not being at least experimented with in some part of Australia. However, the Examiners felt that there was still considerable scope for further developments.

In their reply the Australian delegation said that the Examiners referred on page 62 of their report to a good deal of overlapping in the provision of career information, guidance and counselling. While in terms of apparent responsibilities this was true, the Australian authorities doubted whether, in practice, significant overlapping occurred at the operational level. In most States of the Commonwealth activities were carried on in the light of reasonably clear guidelines as to respective functions.

The observation that co-ordination of functions could be improved greatly (pages 63 and 64) was a justifiable one, although it was difficult to accept the charge that there was insufficient awareness in Australia of their essential inter-relationship.

Commenting on the question of recurrent education Mr. Jones remarked that it was widely appreciated in Australia that the provision of a multiplicity of post-school opportunities in education could reduce the pressures on students who were making the transition from school to other activities in that young people would know that there would be further opportunities to equip themselves for life and its component of work. But no general scheme for making recurrent education available had yet been devised in Australia and consequently there was little experience of how recurrent education might contribute to solving the problems of transition.

It was by no means clear that recurrent education was necessarily a potential solution to the problems of transition from school to further education or working life. It might well be that certain individuals with the capacity to accept further education and who had left school as early as possible might benefit from more easily accessible educational opportunities. Nevertheless, for those students unable to profit from education or training in the orthodox sense it was difficult to see that recurrent education had very much new to offer

It would also seem that in devising a comprehensive or general scheme of recurrent education in Australia regard should be had to developing less formal courses more closely tailored to the vocational and occupational needs of persons seeking employment. (This would not, of course, be the sole purpose of recurrent education.) Some courses of this kind might best be offered at the work place or in annexes to industrial establishments.

On the question of parental influence over the career choices of young people, there was a general feeling in Australian education that the direct influence of parents on career choices was highly significant, but the subject warranted further research. However, the sociological literature in Australia made it clear that parents' social class was indeed the main determinant of young people's occupational choices.

Employment authorities would agree that the influence of parents on career choices was significant but imperfectly understood. The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations through the Commonwealth Employment Service had for many years run programmes designed to make parents and their children aware of the problems and possibilities open when choosing careers. These programmes had included career nights at schools, extensive counselling of both school leavers and parents, and the publication and distribution of career guidance material in both book and pamphlet form. It was doubtful, however, whether any programmes had been devised or indeed were envisaged which were directed specifically at parents in an attempt to equip them for their role in influencing the career choices of their children.

In the general discussion which followed these opening remarks the New Zealand delegate expressed the view that counsellors in schools were often too academic, preferring to play the role of psychological advisers concerned with the pastoral care of students rather than to give advice on life outside the school. The Danish delegate considered that a more fundamental problem was that teachers did not have enough experience of life outside education. Dr. Mossenson commented that staff shortages in recent years had reduced the possibility of providing teachers with opportunities for obtaining experience outside education. Now that teachers were becoming more plentiful this situation might change.

The Structure of Post-Compulsory Education

This part of the review was introduced by Dr. Roeloffs. He drew attention to the relative lack of resources that had been devoted to Technical and Further Education in the past and wondered whether this situation was likely to change. The Examiners felt that TAFE was the sector of education best suited to provide for the subsequent educational needs of the early school leavers discussed previously. However, the Examiners also wondered whether the distinctions between the Colleges of Advanced Education and TAFE and between the Colleges and the Universities were not somewhat artificial. Would not the interests of young people be better served if the whole of tertiary education were planned and administered as a single branch of education?

Mr. Jones said that he had been heavily involved in the development of the present institutional arrangements for tertiary education and naturally felt some pride in them. However, he was certainly not going to pretend that they were perfect. There was a need for rationalisation, and this would be a major task of the proposed post-secondary education commission which would be established shortly. The new body would co-ordinate the work of the present Commonwealth advisory commissions for universities, colleges, and technical and further education. He believed that it was the top priority to strengthen TAFE and that this would probably require an increase in federal funding.

He acknowledged that at the present time many of the Colleges of Advanced Education felt themselves to be threatened. This was partly because of the sharp reduction in the demand for teachers resulting from demographic trends.

In response to a question about the development of Community Colleges he remarked that in the Australian context the term had a different significance in metropolitan than rural areas. In the latter it suggested an institution that provided the whole range of post-compulsory courses from leisure time activities to degree-level work directed to the needs of the particular area. It was likely that in some country districts TAFE institutions would be well placed to fill this role. In the metropolitan areas, where there was already a wide range of opportunities for educationally able school leavers, the community function was likely to refer more to adult and recurrent education types of activities. The role of the universities and CAEs would be to provide more open access to the higher levels of education.

In response to a question from the Belgian delegate Mr. Jones said that students' rights of transfer between institutions were increasingly being recognised and credit was being given for courses completed.

Disadvantaged and Potentially Disadvantaged Groups

The penultimate topic covered was the extent of special disadvantages experienced by particular groups of young people with regard to opportunities after school, over and above the general problems already discussed. The subject was introduced by Professor Williams who said that girls and young women seemed still to have rather fewer opportunities open to them than their male counterparts, despite much current awareness of the issue in Australia. The present recession seemed to have exacerbated their situation as far as employment was concerned.

Three other social groups in Australia appeared to have special difficulties when they left school: Aboriginals, children of recent immigrants of a non-Anglo-Saxon cultural background and young people from rural areas.

As far as the first two groups were concerned there appeared to be a real dilemma between recognising their special needs through the provision of education in the ethnic language and cultural tradition and integrating them into the mainstream of Australian social and economic life as quickly as possible by exposing them in school as much as possible to the dominant cultural tradition. The latter was particularly important if these young people were to enjoy full equality of job opportunities.

Dr. Mossenson replied that at present there was more interest in Australia than ever before in the provision of multi-cultural education. The Schools Commission and the Curriculum Development Centre were assisting by making materials available in a variety of languages for use in the migrant education programme. Some concern was felt, however, that there were dangers in pursuing these policies too far. Accentuating the differences between various cultural groups and thereby reducing the rate of assimilation might work to the disadvantage of the children in minority groups, particularly those who had prospects of embarking on professional careers. As the Examiners had pointed out, while it was true that migrant youngsters featured prominently among early school leavers, many others were highly motivated and succeeded in fulfilling high ambitions. Out-of-school education programmes designed to teach the language and cultural background of minority groups were receiving encouragement and assistance. The support given varied from State to State but usually included the use of school facilities and sometimes assistance with tuition costs.

Aboriginal education was complicated by the differing attitudes towards secondary education of the Aborigines themselves. While some urban Aborigines accepted education as a means of establishing themselves in the larger society, tribal people usually adopted a separate view which manifested itself in movements back to traditional life styles and organisations.

The most significant attempt to provide a secondary education programme for Aborigines which incorporated cultural elements of Aboriginal society was to be found in the residential colleges in the Northern Territory. Three such institutions, which had been established since 1963, provided living and support facilities to enable tribal Aboriginal children to attend local high schools. The colleges also offered a transitional year for those students who would be unable to cope with the academic and social demands of a high school. For those children who could not benefit from the high school programme the colleges offered pre-vocational training courses. To achieve the aim of ensuring access to both cultures, bi-cultural programmes were offered in all three colleges. In the States which had significant

Aboriginal populations - Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia - the trend was towards the development of bi-cultural educational programmes in the schools serving Aboriginal communities.

For those Aboriginals living in cities and towns who were removed from Aboriginal culture, education authorities supported the proposition that the aim must be to equip them to function as successfully as possible in the society in which they found themselves. In recent years, since the Commonwealth has been given constitutional responsibility in this field, the flow of resources into Aboriginal education had accelerated. Secondary scholarship schemes had been introduced to keep Aboriginal children longer at school and vocational programmes received particular emphasis in Aboriginal schools and in those schools having a large Aboriginal component.

Despite attempts to reduce their disabilities it must be accepted that young people from small and isolated communities suffered disadvantages with respect to post-secondary educational options and employment opportunities. At the secondary level, State authorities provided correspondence courses and the Commonwealth had lately taken over and liberalised the earlier existing living-away-from-home allowances which enable these youngsters to study in larger centres. At the post-secondary level, several universities and Colleges of Advanced Education offered extension courses which were now being upgraded through greater use of audio-visual aids. In some areas "block training" was available for apprentices from isolated areas and short term residential courses were conducted in larger centres for groups of country students. In part, the growing interest in community colleges and in technical and further education were responses to the aspirations of people living in remote areas.

Education authorities did much in secondary education to enrich the life styles and enhance the job opportunities of adolescents and young adults living in non-urban areas. More important than educational limitations in the post-secondary field in such regions was the fact that education did not necessarily lead to employment. Employment prospects were bound to remain restricted in rural and isolated communities and the migration of young people to the cities and large centres must be expected to continue.

Formal equality of opportunity for girls was assured by the State systems some of which were wholly co-educational while others were substantially so. In the main, the private school systems consisted of single sex schools, although in recent years there had been a movement towards co-education in several institutions. As pointed out by the Examiners, girls had shared in the improved upper school retention rates of recent decades and, at the present time, had almost overhauled boys as a proportion of the age group. The number of girls taking subjects such as science and mathematics through to matriculation level was increasing and in co-educational schools the trend was for timetables to be modified so as to allow unrestricted access to elective subjects for both sexes. This meant that the educational differences between boys and girls had been reduced with consequential improved employment prospects for girls.

Investigations at Federal and State levels, some of which had been generated during Women's International Year, had drawn attention to the sexist nature of school materials and aroused criticism of the guidance service traditionally offered to girls. As a consequence, compensatory programmes in guidance and careers counselling had been mounted in some States. The effect of recent efforts to raise expectations and to improve the self-image of girl students was almost certainly achieving results which were reflected at the tertiary level. Females were enrolling in larger numbers in traditional male preserves such as engineering and more were studying for professions such as law, medicine and dentistry, where formerly only small numbers of females were to be found.

As the Examiners had indicated, girls living in rural communities and in non-metropolitan industrial areas, suffered particular limitations with regard to employment possibilities for which little prospect of solution existed beyond migration to another centre. In addition, it should not be ignored that improving job opportunities for girls in today's lean conditions would inevitably exacerbate the employment problems of boys who left school early with limited job skills.

Statistics and Research

Dr. Moberg asked what steps were being undertaken to improve the quality and quantity of statistical information available, particularly at the Commonwealth level, so as to permit a more thorough analysis of the whole process of transition between the various branches of education and from all branches of education into employment.

Replying, Mr. Jones said that the Examiners' contentions about inadequacies in the statistical information available on the transition process were accepted although the delays in availability were not all that long. The Bureau of Statistics' national sample surveys were now yielding considerably improved information on the movement from school to work or further study, but a problem did exist in the lack of flow data from education to employment and from one institution to another. The Graduate Careers Council had published information on career destinations of graduates in Australia each year since 1972. Information on graduates from major colleges had been included since 1974. The information was collected by questionnaire, which had about a 75% response rate. The response rate was likely to improve at least in universities, following the undertaking by Vice-Chancellors to lend their personal support to the operation of the surveys. The Australian Council for Educational Research study School Leavers in Australia 1971-1972 was a repetition of the type of study undertaken to obtain greater detail than that available in the Bureau of Statistics publication Survey of Leavers from Schools, Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions. The study gave information on school leaver destinations, cross-classified by sex, residential area, type of school attended and father's occupation.

Some limited information on flow statistics was collected by the Bureau of Statistics on the flow from school to university and CAE. Information was available on whether students commencing courses come directly from school, whether there was a delay in commencing tertiary study, or if they had some other post-secondary qualification. The Bureau of Statistics and the Universities Commission were developing a system of university statistics based on individual student records which would be able to provide more detailed flow statistics. It was hoped that similar statistics for the Advanced Education sector would follow. Work had started on an agreed Data Element Dictionary for TAFE, but some unwillingness remained to alter existing administrative arrangements to produce comparable data between types of educational institutions and between States. The Australian Education Council was continuing to give consideration to improving the comparability of the data base in Australian education.

One new development was the agreement to produce an Australian Standard Classification of Education which would be applicable across all sectors of education and should lead to the development of comparable statistics throughout education. It was anticipated that the Classification would provide a sound basis for compiling and publishing statistics of education and would serve as a powerful tool for manpower planning studies. Work would commence in 1977 and will be largely undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Employment statistics in Australia were derived from two main sources, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' national sample surveys of about 30,000 households and data from the Commonwealth Employment Service. One shortcoming with the Bureau statistics concerned the occupation classification which did not always differentiate sufficiently different skill levels, and this consequently places restrictions on analysis of flows from education to employment. The Commonwealth Employment Service statistics presented problems. Their coverage was limited as not all unemployed persons availed themselves of the Service; they were very much subject to seasonal variation. The provision of statistics by the Service was investigated by an advisory committee set up for that purpose in 1973 and many of the recommended changes had already been introduced. The statistical service had again been specifically mentioned in the terms of reference of a current inquiry into the Commonwealth Employment Service.

The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations had developed close liaison with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and one product of this activity might be acceptance of the principle that comprehensive workforce data should be published by the Bureau on a monthly basis. It was nevertheless important to emphasize that resource limitations in the Bureau and in the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations limited the range and detail of statistical information that can be made available.

Consideration needed to be given to the development of a series of longitudinal studies of secondary school age cohorts, following them through to employment and/or post-secondary study, and investigating the links between education and subsequent career experience.

Dr. Moberg wished to know what machinery existed, or was envisaged, to undertake systematic research into the problems of transition and evaluation on a continuing basis of the various experiences gained.

Mr. Jones replied that the Study Group on National Assessment of Educational Progress, which was funded by the Education Research and Development Committee, might prove to be a significant stimulus to developments in this area. The Australian Education Council Working Party on the Transition from Secondary Education to Employment had recommended that the Council together with Ministers for Labour should establish permanent machinery for co-ordinating policy development, research and the exchange of information.

It was possible that the National Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training might also make a contribution to the promotion of research in this area. At the request of the University Vice-Chancellors' Committee the Commonwealth Department of Education was planning a longitudinal study of all students who commenced in universities and Colleges of Advanced Education in 1971. In addition to studying the academic progress of the entire cohort, it was intended that a sample of students, both graduates and discontinued students, would be contacted to determine employment experience and socio-economic background. It would be the first national study of its type since an analysis of 1961 beginning university students, and would provide some information on the flow of tertiary trained manpower into the labour market. The Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training hoped to use the results of this study in its report.

The Chairman of the OECD Education Committee, Mr. Leestma (USA), drew attention to the somewhat similar problems in his country and mentioned three programmes recently approved by Congress -

the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, the Linguistic Disadvantaged Program and the Special Program for Indians.

In view of the late hour the Chairman then concluded the meeting by thanking the Examiners and the Australian Delegation for two important reports and for providing delegates with a stimulating confrontation meeting that had highlighted several problems of urgent concern in many Member countries.

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